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**Media, Diaspora, and Political Engagement:
Exploring the Role of Ethnic Chinese Media in Shaping
Chinese New Zealanders' Political Participation in Aotearoa**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
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at
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Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of Chinese-language media, 2020 New Zealand general election, and the lived experiences of the Chinese diaspora within New Zealand's dual bicultural and multicultural frameworks. As New Zealand's demographic composition grows more diverse, Chinese-language media have become vital in supporting cultural continuity and promoting political involvement within the Chinese community. This research emphasizes the distinctive role of the ethnic media—especially platforms like WeChat—in influencing the political behaviour, identity formation, and community dynamics of Chinese New Zealanders. Through the mixed research methods of the 2020 New Zealand general election, the study explores how the ethnic media shape voting patterns and political preferences, bridging critical language and access gaps for a community often sidelined within mainstream political discourse.

Moreover, the study addresses the specific challenges faced by Chinese-language media, including financial constraints and censorship, and examines the broader impacts of information accessibility and media quality on democratic participation. The findings deepen the understanding of the Chinese diaspora's shifting role within New Zealand's political landscape, reflecting wider global trends in diaspora media and minority political engagement. By positioning the experiences of Chinese New Zealanders within New Zealand's bicultural commitments and its multicultural realities, this research offers nuanced insights into the integration of the ethnic media in supporting a society's democratic infrastructure.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	2
Table of Contents.....	3
List of Tables, Figures and Illustrations	4
Chapter one Introduction: Chinese Diaspora, Media, and Political Engagement in New Zealand6	
1.1 Chinese Diaspora Under Aotearoa New Zealand Context	7
1.2 Comparative Media Spheres: New Zealand English Media, Ethnic Chinese Media, and Mainland China’s Media Landscape.....	12
1.2.1) Ethnic Chinese language media in New Zealand	13
1.2.2) New Zealand media sphere.....	14
1.2.3) Mainland China media sphere.....	24
1.3 New Zealand politics and election	29
1.3.1) The policies of different political parties in the 53 rd New Zealand Parliament.....	30
1.4 Chinese New Zealanders political engagement.....	33
1.5 Research significance	34
1.6 Mapping Dissertation	35
Chapter Two: Chinese migrant, ethnic media and politics in New Zealand	39
2.1 Global Chinese Diaspora: Patterns of Migration and Integration	43
2.2 Multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand: Evolution and Contemporary Challenges ...	48
2.3 Ethnic Language Media in Other English-Speaking Countries.....	50
2.4 The New Zealand Media Sphere.....	54
2.5 Media Landscape in China	58
2.6 Social Media Platform WeChat During the 2020 General Election	64
2.7 New Zealand’s Political History: Biculturalism, Representation, and Participation	75
2.8 Minority Political Engagement: Barriers and Opportunities	77
Chapter Three Chinese New Zealanders and Political Engagement in New Zealand’s General Elections	84
3.1 New Zealand’s Historical Chinese MPs.....	84
3.2 Chinese language media in New Zealand.....	87
3.3 Who Consumes Chinese-Language Media in Aotearoa?	91
3.4 Unusual Covid pandemic at the election time	103
3.5 New Zealand Political Parties targeting Chinese New Zealanders at the election	106
Chapter Four Research Design, Methods and Quantitative Study.....	112
4.1 The Socioeconomic Status and Political Autonomy of Chinese New Zealanders:.....	116

4.2 Bilingual Platforms and Digital Integration Among Chinese New Zealanders:	119
4.3 Trust, Bias, and Cross-Cultural Understanding in the Chinese New Zealand Community	121
4.4 The Role and Challenges of Chinese-Language Media in New Zealand's Media Landscape	124
4.5 Media Influence and Voting Behaviour:	128
4.6 A Quantitative Survey Analysis of Political Engagement Among Chinese New Zealanders	133
Chapter Five In-Depth Interviews and Minority Voter Engagement.....	137
5.1 Political Preferences Among Chinese New Zealanders	137
5.2 Multifaceted Influences on Voting Behaviour: Economic, Social, and Cultural Factors Shaping the 2020 New Zealand Election Choices	141
5.3 Patterns of Political Engagement and Media Consumption	147
5.4 The Evolving Landscape of Media Use—From Traditional Media to New Media.....	150
5.5 Bridging Cultural Understanding Between Māori and Chinese Communities in New Zealand	153
5.6 Motivations for Voting in the 2020 General Election	156
5.7 The Influence of Political Issues on Chinese New Zealanders' Voting Decisions.....	158
Chapter Six Key Insights into Chinese New Zealanders' Political Participation, Media Influence, and Community Relations	160
Conclusion	165
References	172
Appendix A Questionnaire	204
Appendix B Depth Interview.....	211
Appendix C Ethic Approval	216

List of Tables, Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1. Simplified Chinese language website from Act Party.....	31
Figure 2 China Media Group Multiple Platforms	63
Figure 3 New Zealand Politicians and Parties WeChat (微信) Official Account.....	65
Figure 4 The Reason Why Politicians Operate a WeChat Account	67
Figure 5 Former Labour MP Naisi Chen Won Her First Term at Parliament in the 2020 New Zealand General Election	68
Figure 6 Survey Results Regarding the Chinese Diaspora Voting Preference.....	72
Figure 7 National Party Candidates Targeting the Chinese Community at the 2023 General Election on Little Red Book (小红书).....	73
Figure 8 Ethnic Chinese language media landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	90

Figure 9 Chinese language media – Sky Kiwi at 2020 general election	93
Figure 10 Chinese language media – tv33 at 2020 general election.....	93
Figure 11 Chinese language media – BNE at 2020 general election.....	94
Figure 12 RNZ launched WeChat (微信) Official Account at 2024	97
Figure 13 RNZ 中文 Homepage.....	98
Figure 14 Matters for Chinese community at the election time.....	99
Figure 15. COVID-19 pandemic data in the world by 8 May 2020	104
Figure 16. New Zealand the COVID-19 total 10 May 2020. Source from: Support The Spinoff	104
Figure 17 From left to right: former Labour List MP-Naisi Chen WeChat (微信) Account, National Party WeChat (微信) Account and Labour WeChat (微信) Account	108
Figure 18 Survey demographics.....	118
Figure 19 Bilingual platforms and digital integration among Chinese New Zealanders	121
Figure 20 Trust, bias, and cross-cultural understanding in the Chinese New Zealand community	124
Figure 21 The Role and Challenges of Chinese-Language Media in New Zealand's Media Landscape	127
Figure 22 Media influence and voting behaviour	132
Figure 23 Participants details for depth interview.....	215

Table 2 Chinese Descent MPs in New Zealand since MMP system 1996

Table 3 2020 New Zealand general election party policies from Chinese language media (新中传媒 NZC Media Group Ltd)

Table 4 Labour Party and National Party WeChat (微信) articles since election campaign started

Chapter one Introduction: Chinese Diaspora, Media, and Political Engagement in New Zealand

The author came to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2018 to complete my master's degree in Media and Creative Technologies at the University of Waikato. The significant presence of the Chinese population in the city of Hamilton became immediately apparent to me through the prevalence of Chinese restaurants and Asian supermarkets. Even some banks employed Mandarin-speaking staff to cater to the community. Upon entering an Asian supermarket, I observed a variety of Chinese-language newspapers prominently displayed at the entrance. This observation piqued my interest in understanding the operation of Chinese-language media in Aotearoa New Zealand, a predominantly English-speaking country. I began to reflect on how news is reported, written, and disseminated through media outlets, which eventually led to my involvement in studying the Chinese diaspora and media consumption, which forms the basis of this research.

The 2020 New Zealand general election provided a critical point of analysis for my PhD study, not only as many Chinese residents relied on Chinese-language media for election-related information from this research data demonstrate. However, this period also revealed several key issues, including concerns about potential political biases within the Chinese media, the dissemination of incomplete or potentially misleading information regarding political parties, and the generally low political participation rates among the Asian (Chinese) community (Li, Huang, Sibley, & Greaves, 2024). These observations prompted me to investigate the roles and impacts of Chinese media in New Zealand, specifically examining its influence on the political attitudes and voting behaviours of the Chinese diaspora.

In the introductory chapter, the author will explain three main elements of this thesis: What is 'diaspora', the New Zealand and Mainland China media landscapes, and an overview of New Zealand politics. In addition, the research question will be:

How does Chinese-language media, particularly platforms like WeChat, influence the political engagement and voting behaviours of Chinese New Zealanders within New Zealand's bicultural and multicultural frameworks?

What challenges and opportunities do Chinese-language media face in accurately representing and engaging Chinese New Zealanders in the democratic process, and how do these factors impact broader societal integration and political participation?

1.1 Chinese Diaspora Under Aotearoa New Zealand Context

New Zealand's connections with Asia have deep historical roots, beginning with European contact in the late 18th century. Before becoming a British colony, New Zealand was integrated into the British Empire's trading network, which linked it to various Asian ports. From the 1790s to the 1820s, tens of thousands of New Zealand sealskins were exported to Guangzhou (Canton), China, highlighting early economic ties with Asia (Capie, 2012). Chinese migration to New Zealand began in the 1860s, largely driven by the gold rush in Otago and Southland areas (Sew & Agnew, 2020).

Trade relationships and the exchange of goods such as Indian tea, Bengal rum, and Chinese porcelain played a critical role in shaping New Zealand's colonial society. However, by the 1970s, New Zealand's relationship with Asia underwent significant changes. The United Kingdom's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 forced New Zealand to diversify its export markets, resulting in Japan becoming a key trading partner. Simultaneously, the rapid economic rise of the Asian Tigers being South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, shifted Asia's image from a region of poverty to one of economic opportunity (Capie, 2012). These emerging markets opened new possibilities for New Zealand's exports, and these were further strengthened after the end of the Cold War in 1991, when the China and Southeast Asia began to liberalise their economies (Capie, 2012).

Chinese migration to New Zealand commenced in the early 1860s, driven by the Otago gold rush. By December 1861, Pākehā numbered approximately 98,915—outnumbering the estimated Māori population of 56,049—and thus consolidated European dominance over colonial governance, land tenure, and economic decision-making (Total population, 1996). In contrast, fewer than 2,000 Chinese miners, almost exclusively male, were registered on the goldfields by the late 1860s, representing under 2% of the adult population in Otago (Ip, 2005). When alluvial gold yields waned after the mid-1860s, many Chinese returned to China; however, a sizeable minority settled permanently in Thames, Auckland, and the Waikato, transitioning into market gardening and small-scale commerce (Ip, 2005). Despite

institutionalised discrimination—most notably the £10 poll tax imposed by the Chinese Immigration Act 1881—Chinese communities gradually organised politically, culminating in the poll tax's abolition by the Finance Act (No. 3) 1944 (Manatū Taonga – Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2023). This trajectory of marginalisation, adaptation, and political assertion illustrates the complex role of Chinese settlers in shaping New Zealand's early multicultural landscape.

Despite their efforts, early Chinese immigrants encountered strong opposition. The Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881 marked the first official legal restriction specifically targeting Chinese migrants. This act imposed a poll tax and required Chinese individuals to demonstrate English proficiency before entering the country. Such measures were part of a broader strategy to maintain New Zealand's status as a predominantly British colony (Beaglehole, 2015). Although the Act remained in place until its repeal in 1944, it wasn't until 2002 that the New Zealand government issued a formal apology for the discrimination caused by this policy (NZ History, n.d.).

Despite significant contributions, Chinese immigrants continued to face systemic discrimination. In the early 20th century, Chinese settlers in Auckland who were involved in vegetable farming were often met with hostility from Pākehā communities, who viewed the lower-priced Chinese produce as unfair competition. As a result, many Chinese farmers were pressured to either abandon their farms or relocate (Bohny, 2021). This type of economic discrimination against Chinese immigrants was also prevalent in other English-speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States (Collins, 2002).

In 1987, the passage of the Immigration Act replaced New Zealand's racially exclusionary framework with a universal points-based system prioritising skills, education, and investment potential (New Zealand Parliament, 1987). This reform triggered a dramatic increase in Chinese arrivals—Chinese-born residents grew from 16,953 in 1986 to 52,000 by the 1996 census—transforming the diaspora from predominantly family reunions and student flows into a cohort that included skilled professionals, business migrants, and investor-class entrants (Stats NZ, 1996). Beyond sheer numbers, these newcomers founded Chinese cultural associations, language schools, and professional networks that quickly became active in civic life—serving on city council multicultural advisory panels and national immigrant

forums—thereby marking a shift from economic settlement to organised political and community engagement (Wang, 2019).

Prior to the mid-20th century, Chinese migrants in New Zealand were effectively denied political participation. Under the Chinese Immigration Act 1881, every Chinese entrant paid a £10 poll tax and faced onerous barriers to naturalization—yet only British subjects could appear on the electoral roll under the Electoral Act 1893 (Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023). Consequently, fewer than 50 Chinese New Zealanders were registered voters by 1943. It was not until the poll tax was abolished by the Finance Act (No. 3) 1944 and race-based naturalization restrictions were repealed in 1961 that Chinese New Zealanders could uniformly acquire citizenship and full voting rights (Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023; New Zealand Parliament, 1987).

From the 2000s onward, Chinese New Zealanders have become steadily more active in national politics. Data from the 2014 New Zealand Election Study show that 39% of Chinese-born respondents voted for the National Party, compared to just 21% for Labour (Johnson, 2016). Researchers attribute this pattern to two main factors: (a) National's emphasis on economic growth and stability, which resonates strongly with many in the Chinese community (Chen, 2020), and (b) deliberate outreach via Chinese-language newspapers, community associations, and social media like WeChat, which helped raise awareness of voter registration and platform issues (Wang, 2019).

According to Dr. Sally Liu, a senior lecturer at Massey University, many Chinese voters come from middle-class backgrounds, which often aligns their political preferences with parties that emphasise economic development. This trend illustrates how economic prosperity remains a key determinant in the political decisions of Chinese New Zealanders (Chen, 2020).

The nature of Chinese migration has evolved significantly over the past century. After the burst of emigration associated with the gold-rushes traditionally, Chinese emigrants preferred to settle in Southeast Asia, but in recent decades, there has been a noticeable shift towards settler societies such as North America, Australia, and New Zealand (Skeldon, 2004; Liu & Ran, 2022). This reflects global changes in

migration patterns, where economic opportunities and political stability in destination countries play a crucial role in influencing the movement of Chinese migrants.

Historically, Chinese New Zealanders were explicitly barred from naturalisation and the franchise under race-based laws such as the Chinese Immigration Act 1881—which imposed a £10 poll tax on every arrival (Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023). These barriers were only removed with the Citizenship Amendment Act 1961 (New Zealand Parliament, 1961). A further watershed came in 1987, when the Immigration Act replaced overtly discriminatory criteria with a universal points-based system; between 1986 and 1996, the Chinese-born population jumped from 16,953 to over 52,000 (New Zealand Parliament, 1987; Stats NZ, 1996).

Yet the shadow of exclusion still fuels community memory and mobilisation: Manying Ip’s edited volume *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity* (2003) and Gilbert Wong’s chapter “Is Saying Sorry Enough?” document the long campaign for an official apology, while documentaries like *The Footprints of the Dragon* (NZ On Screen, 1994) and *Here to Stay – The Chinese* (NZ On Screen, 2007) bring intergenerational stories of poll-tax hardship and stereotyping to a broader audience.

Since the 2000s, political engagement has risen markedly: the 2014 New Zealand Election Study found that 68% of Chinese-born respondents voted—up from around 55% in 2005—spurred in part by Chinese-language voter-education drives led by community organisations (Johnson, 2016; Wang, 2019).

Although the Treaty of Waitangi—signed in 1840 between the British Crown and Māori chiefs—formally established a bicultural partnership, it was ignored in practice for well over a century. Only in the 1970s, amid an upsurge in Māori activism, did the government begin to honour its obligations: the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 created the Waitangi Tribunal to investigate breaches; the Māori Language Act 1987 granted te reo Māori official-language status; and subsequent statutes such as the State-Owned Enterprises Act 1986 and the Resource Management Act 1991 embedded Treaty principles into public policy. It was not until after these reforms that the Treaty truly became a factor shaping everyday life in Aotearoa.

For Chinese and other more recent migrant communities—whose arrivals accelerated under the points-based Immigration Act 1987—the evolving bicultural

framework now coexists with a parallel multicultural agenda enshrined in the Human Rights Act 1993 and government multicultural strategies. Community groups and civic leaders must therefore negotiate both sets of obligations: on one hand, respecting the Crown–Māori partnership; on the other, advocating for ethnic-minority rights and representation. These dual imperatives highlight the complexity of New Zealand's civic landscape today.

Next section will explore how multiculturalism has developed alongside biculturalism and the specific challenges it poses for Chinese New Zealanders seeking full inclusion in both spheres.

Significant demographic changes accompanied these economic shifts, for example New Zealand's Asian population has grown rapidly, driven by both immigration and natural population growth. According to Spoonley (2020), Asian communities have a younger age profile and higher birth rates, which has contributed to sustained growth. By 2043, Asians are projected to make up 25percent of the total population, with Chinese New Zealanders dominating the group (Stats NZ, 2021; Spoonley, 2020).

However, despite their contributions, Asian communities have faced challenges nationwide. Historical exclusion, such as anti-Chinese discrimination during the early 20th century, has left lingering effects. Spoonley (2020) predicts that by 2040, Asians will make up 40percent of New Zealand's urban population, raising important questions about the interplay between biculturalism and multiculturalism.

Since the 1980s, the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi) have shaped New Zealand's bicultural model Tangata Whenua (Māori), yet the increasing presence of diasporic communities necessitates a rethinking of how biculturalism functions in a more ethnically diverse society.

The growth of New Zealand's multicultural society, beginning with Pasifika communities in the mid-20th century and expanding with other ethnic groups, has transformed how diversity is understood. Multiculturalism seeks to address the needs of immigrant and minority communities, acknowledging the importance of race, ethnicity, and religion in shaping a cohesive society (Good, 2005; Robie, 2009).

Today, as diasporic communities become more established, many are actively engaged in New Zealand's political sphere. These communities have developed their own media platforms, and the New Zealand Parliament now includes representatives from a range of ethnic backgrounds, including Chinese, Indian, and Pacific communities (Li, Huang, Sibley, & Greaves, 2023; Martin, n.d.).

Chinese migration to New Zealand, which began in 1865 during the gold rush, has continued to influence the country's demographic landscape. The Chinese community is now the largest non-European, non-Polynesian ethnic group in New Zealand, though projections suggest the Indian population may overtake it in the coming decades (Ip, 2015; Sharma, 2023). By 2043, the Chinese and Indian populations are both expected to exceed 500,000, making them key contributors to New Zealand's population growth (Stats NZ, 2021).

As New Zealand continues to evolve, its commitment to cultural diversity remains strong. Government initiatives are focused on leveraging the economic and social benefits of this diversity, recognising its role in innovation and global engagement. The Office of Ethnic Communities plays a central role in these efforts, ensuring that New Zealand's growing multiculturalism contributes to national prosperity.

In line with these developments, the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand, like many other diasporic communities, significantly relies on the ethnic media to stay informed, preserve their cultural identity, and maintain connections with both their homeland and host country. The ethnic media plays a particularly important role during significant political events, such as the 2020 New Zealand General Election, where media consumption shapes the political awareness, engagement, and behaviour of the Chinese community. These media outlets, often in the Chinese language, provide news, political commentary, and election information tailored to the community's specific cultural and linguistic needs, offering an alternative to mainstream media.

1.2 Comparative Media Spheres: New Zealand English Media, Ethnic Chinese Media, and Mainland China's Media Landscape

According to the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (2024), four key factors influence how ethnic minorities in New Zealand, particularly the ethnic Chinese, access information through the ethnic media. These factors include the community's strong reliance on the ethnic media, the challenges posed by language barriers, the

diversity of information channels utilised, and the varied patterns of media consumption. Additionally, the study highlights the lower engagement with non-the ethnic media and identifies opportunities for improving policy and service communication to better meet the needs of these communities.

Building on these insights, it is evident that the ethnic media holds a pivotal position in the lives of New Zealand's ethnic minorities, particularly the Chinese community. This reliance highlights the critical need for culturally and linguistically relevant content while also drawing attention to key challenges such as language barriers and the limited reach of mainstream media to connect with this community. As outlined by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (2024), the ethnic media functions as a crucial source of information, bridging gaps that the non-the ethnic media often leave unaddressed. Gaining a deeper understanding of the varied media consumption patterns within these communities is essential for enhancing government communication strategies and service provision.

To further explore this dynamic, it is important to examine how the ethnic Chinese language media in New Zealand specifically addresses the informational needs of the Chinese community and the roles it plays in shaping their engagement with both local and global events.

1.2.1) Ethnic Chinese language media in New Zealand

Both Sun (2002) and Font (2011) emphasised that the ethnic media serves as a crucial gateway for migrants, providing them with essential residency-related information while shaping migration ideologies. In New Zealand, the ethnic media spans a diverse range of platforms, representing Chinese, Fijian, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Niuean, Samoan, and Tongan communities (Ministry for Ethnic Communities, 2023). Among these, Chinese the ethnic media is particularly dominant, with a strong presence across radio, television, newspapers, and websites, making it a central component of the ethnic media landscape (Ministry for Ethnic Communities, 2023).

Further research by NZ on Air (2021) shows that Chinese New Zealanders frequently engage with Chinese-language media, underscoring its importance. However, interviews conducted by NZ on Air (2021) with participants from Chinese and Indian communities reveal a disparity in content accessibility. Chinese participants reported

challenges in accessing New Zealand-based content due to language barriers and their migration background, while Indian participants encountered fewer difficulties.

This disparity in content accessibility highlights the Chinese communities' strong dependence on the ethnic media, which plays a vital role in bridging these gaps. Data shows that a significant portion of the Chinese communities relies on ethnic websites and social media platforms, particularly WeChat (微信), as their primary sources of news and information. This reliance stems from the community's need for culturally and linguistically tailored media, further emphasizing the limited use of non-ethnic media among this group.

Government research, such as those conducted by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, has arrived at similar conclusions, confirming the significance of the ethnic media in meeting the needs of Chinese New Zealanders (Ministry of Ethnic Community, 2024).

The data highlights a significant reliance on the ethnic media for information and media consumption within the Chinese community.

1.2.2) New Zealand media sphere

In New Zealand, there are very few media companies that are entirely New Zealand-owned. As Rosenberg (2008) pointed out, about a decade ago, foreign-owned corporations and media conglomerates such as NZME, MediaWorks, and Sky dominated the media landscape, and this remains largely unchanged today. With the continued decline of audiences, subscribers, advertisers, and viewers for traditional media, New Zealand's media industry has faced significant upheavals. For instance, MediaWorks has sought a buyer for TV3, and the government has considered merging two state-owned media entities, Television New Zealand (TVNZ) and Radio New Zealand (RNZ) (Myllylahti & Baker, 2019). Meanwhile, local media companies and New Zealanders are bearing the cost of the government's reluctance to tax the local profits of international social media giants. Government funding for media does not address the fact that New Zealand's media audience is shrinking. The competition traditional media faces from digital platforms primarily stems from the advertising market, where Google and Facebook dominate. Unlike local media companies, these multinational corporations do not pay taxes on their New Zealand advertising revenues proportionate to their earnings (Plekhanova, 2020). In effect,

these digital platforms often distribute news content originally produced by struggling local media companies, further intensifying the competition for viewers' attention. This situation not only harms local media and public discourse but also disadvantages New Zealand taxpayers, as these international giants do not contribute taxes in line with their local earnings (Plekhanova, 2020).

The New Zealand media landscape reflects the country's colonial legacy and evolving multiculturalism, comprising a distinctive blend of state-owned and commercial outlets. Historically, English-language platforms dominated, a result of New Zealand's British colonial origins. Up until the mid-20th century, radio, newspapers, and television were almost entirely English-speaking, primarily catering to English-speaking audiences (Hope, 2012; Lealand, 2008). This monolingual dominance persisted until the 1970s, when social and cultural shifts began to reshape the linguistic and cultural makeup of the media (Matthews & Sullivan, 2020).

One of the defining aspects of New Zealand's media has been its balance between public service and commercial broadcasting. State broadcasters like Radio New Zealand (RNZ) and Television New Zealand (TVNZ) have played pivotal roles in promoting national identity and serving the public interest (Lealand & Martin, 2001). Simultaneously, commercial outlets have competed for market share by prioritizing content designed to attract and retain audiences (Thompson, 2020).

A significant turning point for New Zealand's media came in the 1970s with the revival of the Māori language (Te Reo Māori) as part of a wider effort to preserve and enhance Māori culture. In 1987, Te Reo Māori was declared an official language, marking a key moment in New Zealand's cultural landscape. Since then, the language has found a place in mainstream media (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2018). Māori phrases are now frequently used by journalists and broadcasters, especially in state media, during culturally significant events and official programming. Subtitles and Māori-language programming have also become more prevalent, with state-funded platforms like Te Whakaata Māori (Māori Television) promoting Māori language and culture (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2021).

The establishment of Te Whakaata Māori in 2004 represented a state-backed initiative aimed at ensuring the survival and development of te reo Māori in the media. The creation of Māori radio stations and the provision of media training

programs further supported this effort, helping to keep the Māori language a dynamic and evolving presence in New Zealand's modern media (Smith, 2019).

Today, although English remains the dominant language across most media platforms, the use of te reo Māori has become more integrated into state-funded outlets. This increasing inclusion, coupled with the rise of other the ethnic media, mirrors New Zealand's growing cultural diversity (Spoonley, 2020). To fully understand the impact of recent events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, on the New Zealand media landscape, it is essential to recognize these historical developments.

In recent years, New Zealand's media sphere has faced substantial changes. Early on during the pandemic, there were proposals for public and commercial media mergers, but these plans were halted, followed by significant job cuts and an overall decline in merger efforts post-pandemic (Manhire, 2023; Corlett, 2024).

Regarding the newspaper market, The NZ Herald has experienced a decline in sales since around 2004, as reported by News Works NZ (Myllylahti, 2015). By 2016, an editor forecasted continued challenges for print newspapers, citing the rise of internet use: "Digital audiences are growing rapidly, people are slowly moving away from print, and advertising revenues are declining. At some point in the future, we will not be able to sustain a daily newspaper" (Coburn, 2016, para.3).

As noted in the *Media Trends Report 2015*, technological advancements, including the widespread adoption of the internet, tablets, and smartphones, have significantly increased user numbers. This shift has yielded benefits for certain sectors while causing difficulties for others. The future of print newspapers remains uncertain, with no clear answer as to how long even prominent publications can survive. In a bid to navigate these challenges, NZME is the leading print media companies in New Zealand, argued to the Commerce Commission that a merger would improve their chances of enduring the crisis (Fresne, 2017). Both companies have implemented a "digital-first" strategy, prioritizing free online content over print editions. However, some commentators, such as Rennie (2017), criticize this approach, suggesting that publishers are undermining their print media by offering immediate online access to articles: "Newspaper publishers are now busy basically tearing their print media

apart by putting the content on the Internet immediately, so that you read it on one or other of their websites and you open up the paper next day and there's the article you've already read" (para.20).

In a bold move within the New Zealand media industry, NZME introduced a paywall for *nzherald.co.nz* on April 30, 2019, marking a significant shift in its revenue strategy (NZ Herald, 2019). Myllylahti and Baker (2019) highlight that this "soft" paywall model allows free access to some content while charging for premium journalism. This new model aims to attract readers while providing financial incentives to the newsroom. However, the long-term success of the paywall remains to be seen.

Looking ahead, the Nielsen Company (2015) predicted that newspapers would face significant challenges over the next five years as they struggle to balance declining advertising and subscription revenues with the uncertainties of digital income streams.

What about magazine market in New Zealand? Magazines have traditionally enjoyed significant popularity in New Zealand, with the country estimated to have the second or third highest per capita readership worldwide (Weir, 2015). By December 2017, readership for several major New Zealand magazines had grown, led by *AA Directions* with an average readership of 565,000 and *New Zealand Women's Day* with 353,000 readers. Due to the pandemic, the Bauer group was unable to continue operations and closed down (New Zealand Herald, 2020).

According to Roy Morgan data, half of New Zealand's leading magazines either maintained or slightly increased their readership in the 12 months leading up to December 2017. This included cross-platform audiences, where readers accessed magazine content in both print and online formats.

However, the New Zealand magazine industry faced severe setbacks in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Bauer Media NZ, a German-owned publisher responsible for *Metro*, *North & South*, *Woman's Day*, *NZ Women's Weekly*, *New Zealand Listener*, and others, announced the closure of its New Zealand operations as of April 22, 2020, citing the pandemic's impact (Wilson, 2020). The drop in advertising revenue, which was the primary financial support for magazines, proved catastrophic. Even after the pandemic, Wilson predicted that the print magazine market in New Zealand would never return to pre-crisis levels.

Similar to magazines, other sectors of New Zealand's media industry, including television and radio, were also adversely affected by Covid-19, primarily due to declining advertising revenues. Among the hardest-hit was *NZ Listener*, a magazine that had survived decades of significant social and economic upheavals but could not withstand the pandemic. Since its inception, *NZ Listener* had brought New Zealand's art, literature, music, and popular culture to the forefront. Its closure marked the loss of a key cultural institution that had reflected the country's history, transitioning from state ownership to corporate and then foreign ownership (Macdonald, 2020). The possibility of an investor rescuing and reviving the *Listener* in the post-Covid era remains uncertain, but Macdonald argues that a New Zealand without the *Listener* is a diminished one.

While some magazines in New Zealand had grown their readership, as seen the overall industry has been struggling for years, with several closures reflecting not just business losses but also the erosion of a corporate and national culture. The future of New Zealand's publishing industry, including the fate of many talented journalists, remains uncertain, though there is hope that financial support or new ownership could provide some relief (Venuto, 2020).

Radio market in New Zealand more inclusive. Radio was first established in New Zealand in 1922, and today there are nearly 30 radio networks and groups operating in the country. While the government has dominated broadcasting since 1925, commercial radio has gained a significant audience through privatization and deregulation. New Zealand's radio market also caters to a wide range of communities, including Māori, Pasifika, ethnic minorities, evangelical Christians, and other special interest groups. Unlike the privately or foreign-owned newspaper and magazine sectors, the radio and television landscape is a mix of public and commercial ownership. Radio New Zealand (RNZ), a state-owned enterprise, supports the Iwi Radio network, while there are also several commercial radio and television broadcasters. Regardless of ownership, radio remains a reliable source of news, information, and commentary, particularly during major events (GfK, 2019b).

Public Radio

RNZ is New Zealand's only public service broadcaster that does not carry commercial advertising. It is governed by the New Zealand Radio Act of 1995 and

the Radio Amendment Act of 2016, with its operations guided by a charter that defines its mission to provide high-quality, diverse, comprehensive, and independent broadcasting and online content to audiences in New Zealand and the Pacific (Radio New Zealand Annual Report, 2017). According to Paul Thompson, RNZ's chief executive, the media industry is currently in a difficult state due to fragmented audiences and the rise of diversified advertising platforms, which threaten the sustainability of traditional media. Thompson reflected on his time as editor of *The Press* in Christchurch, when managing large volumes of advertisements was key to the paper's operations. Over the past decade, this model has dramatically shifted, and Thompson now believes that government intervention is necessary to protect public broadcasting from the volatile media market (Thompson, 2019).

According to the RNZ Annual Report, RNZ is the most trusted media organization in New Zealand, with a majority of New Zealanders valuing public service broadcasting. More than half of the population believes RNZ provides an important service, and three-quarters of New Zealanders have listened to RNZ in the past year. This trust and widespread appreciation suggest that RNZ is well-positioned for long-term sustainability.

Iwi Radio Network

The Iwi Radio Network is a government-funded Māori broadcasting service primarily aimed at Māori speakers. Broadcasting began on Waitangi Day in 1928, with the first Māori program focusing on music, stories, and Māori history (Walker, 2014). In 1988, the Māori Language Commission launched Te Upoko o te Ika, the first Māori-language radio station, which played a crucial role in developing contemporary Māori broadcasting in New Zealand. Huirangi Waikerepuru, a prominent broadcaster and activist who passed away in 2020, was instrumental in advocating for the creation of the Iwi Radio Network. His contributions were recognized in speeches at his televised funeral on Iwi Radio (Te Karere, 2020).

Commercial Radio

New Zealand's commercial radio sector is dominated by two major companies: NZME and MediaWorks. NZME operates a number of stations, including Newstalk ZB, Radio Sport, Flava, ZM, The Hits, Mix, and Coast. MediaWorks broadcasts stations such as Mai FM, The Edge, George, The Rock, More FM, Breeze, The

Sound, and Magic. Despite the reach of these networks, commercial radio has not been immune to the challenges posed by the internet, which has impacted the media landscape in a similar way to newspapers and magazines. By the 2025, Australian company takes full control of MediaWorks (Stuff, 2025).

The Impact of Digital Media

RNZ CEO Paul Thompson, in his speech at the 2014 Commonwealth Broadcasting Association Conference, acknowledged that traditional media is in decline due to media convergence, which allows audiences to access news at any time and from anywhere. As radio, television, and newspapers increasingly move to digital platforms, RNZ has recognized the need to transform into a multimedia organization to retain its audience in this rapidly changing environment.

Television in New Zealand is facing the same challenges. Television was introduced to New Zealand in 1960, much later than in countries such as the United States, Britain, and others. Television New Zealand (TVNZ) underwent several structural changes, becoming a state-owned enterprise in 1988 and later a Crown-owned enterprise in 2001. While TVNZ produces local content, including news, sports, and music programs, the majority of its programming is imported from English-speaking countries like the United States, Britain, and Australia, as producing local shows is more expensive than acquiring them from overseas (Horrocks, n.d.). In 1989, the establishment of the New Zealand broadcasting and television funding agency NZ On Air marked a significant milestone. This agency provides financial support for the production and development of local content. That same year, TV3, New Zealand's first private television channel, was launched, followed by SKY's debut as the first pay-TV service in 1990.

The rise of technology and the advent of streaming platforms like Netflix and Apple TV have shifted a large portion of New Zealand's TV audience to online viewing. In 2019, MediaWorks announced the sale of TV3, a channel that had been in operation for 30 years, due to financial losses and growing competition from global giants like Facebook, Google, and Netflix (Horrocks, 2020). MediaWorks had been losing money for over a decade, and the wider New Zealand television industry has been struggling to compete with international streaming services (Jennings, 2019). The trend toward internet-based viewing is illustrated in Figure 6, which shows a steady

increase in streaming media consumption. Streaming services have gained popularity because they cater to niche audience tastes and provide flexibility in viewing across multiple devices. As a result, MediaWorks' TV3 experienced a 10percent decline in viewership.

TVNZ's former CEO, Kevin Kenrick, acknowledged that most of the network's revenue is derived from advertising, with additional government funding. However, TVNZ is also required to pay dividends to the government, placing further pressure on the broadcaster. Kenrick emphasized that the competition is global, not just local, with companies like Netflix spending billions on programming, while TVNZ's net profit from its content remains around one million dollars. Other streaming platforms, including Amazon and Disney+, have also entered the New Zealand market, intensifying competition. Given these challenges, Kenrick noted that it might be time for a reassessment of the funding and operational model of New Zealand's television industry, particularly as NZ On Air continues to support local content (Jennings, 2019).

Last Decade Most Popular Channels, Sites & Stations in New Zealand

From this review, it becomes clear that the New Zealand media landscape is undergoing significant transformation. Traditional media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, are no longer confined to their specific platforms but are increasingly merging and evolving to ensure survival and growth. The New Zealand government has also been considering merging state media, a topic that will be explored later in this dissertation. Similarly, China's media landscape is rapidly changing, with traditional media like newspapers, radio, and television undergoing reforms to adapt to the fast-paced growth of the internet. Media in China will be introduced next sub chapter 1.2.3).

New Zealand's media landscape is varied, comprising newspapers, television broadcasters, online news platforms, and radio stations, both state-owned and private. Major newspapers include The New Zealand Herald, owned by NZME, and The Dominion Post, owned by Stuff Ltd. Regional newspapers like Otago Daily Times and community papers also play key roles in the media ecosystem. NZME and Stuff dominate the newspaper industry, controlling much of the market.

Television broadcasting is led by two major companies: TVNZ, a state-owned entity, and Three, owned by Discovery. Additionally, Māori Television (Te Whakaata Māori) plays a significant role in promoting Māori language and culture through state-funded broadcasting.

Online news platforms such as Stuff.co.nz and NZHerald.co.nz, linked to their parent newspaper companies, are key sources of digital news. State-owned RNZ also runs a comprehensive online platform, and smaller digital outlets like The Spinoff contribute to the online news space. However, some online news platforms change during the pandemic which lead current New Zealand diverse online news platforms.

New Zealand's radio sector includes a mix of state-funded stations like RNZ, which focuses on public service broadcasting, and private commercial networks operated by MediaWorks and NZME. RNZ National and RNZ Concert serve different public interests, while private stations cater to diverse music and talk audiences.

In addition to traditional media adapting to online formats, platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and other social media sites have become essential for news and entertainment, particularly for younger generations. Flahive (2019) notes that over the past five years, the New Zealand government has invested hundreds of millions of New Zealand dollars in social media advertising, specifically targeting different online user segments. The key advantage of online advertising is that it allows advertisers to reach specific audiences, maximizing the effectiveness of their campaigns. Industry experts have emphasized that advertising platforms provided by technology companies are beneficial for businesses and governments, as they facilitate communication between users and these entities.

For instance, the New Zealand Tourism Department was the largest advertiser in 2017–2018, spending \$45 million, a 25percent increase from four years earlier. Over 90percent of this budget (\$41.3 million) was allocated to Facebook, digital platforms, search engine marketing, social media influencers, and other forms of online advertising. This shift toward online advertising is driven by the tourism industry's importance, as it is New Zealand's largest source of export revenue, contributing 20percent of the country's total export earnings.

Andrew Cushen, the outreach and engagement director at Internet NZ, explained that Tourism New Zealand has partnered with global digital giants such as Google, Tencent, Alibaba, and Facebook, increasing its investment in digital channels. This strategy has successfully promoted New Zealand's tourism resources globally. By leveraging social media and digital platforms, the New Zealand Tourism Department has effectively recommended the country as a tourist destination, with online advertising yielding positive results. Social media has proven to be one of the most effective tools for the government to communicate with both New Zealanders and international audiences.

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) New Zealand has highlighted the growing trend in online advertising expenditure in the country, with search advertising being particularly dominant. Search ads accounted for 63.3percent of total digital advertising revenue (Newsdesk, 2019).

As the internet continues to develop, the New Zealand media industry is expected to rely more heavily on digital advertising. Digital advertising not only generates clicks but also drives revenue growth through those interactions, providing financial support for the future of New Zealand's media industry. However, some critics argue that the New Zealand media's reliance on advertising is problematic and suggest that certain media outlets should reduce their dependence on advertising. While digital advertising remains the primary focus for media development.

The rise of global digital giants such as Facebook, Google, and TikTok has deeply impacted both state-owned and private media in New Zealand (Te, 2021). These platforms have taken over much of the digital advertising market, reducing ad revenues for traditional media outlets and increasing financial pressures. As audiences increasingly turn to digital platforms for news, traditional outlets have had to pivot to online content and restructure their businesses to stay competitive.

Kris Faafoi, a former Broadcasting Minister, proposed merging RNZ and TVNZ to create a unified public broadcaster capable of competing with international digital platforms (Tennent & Worrall, 2020). However, this proposal was ultimately rejected due to concerns that it would reduce editorial diversity, limit content variety, and negatively affect the quality of public broadcasting (Berry & Spittle, 2019). Critics

feared that consolidating New Zealand's two largest state-owned media entities would lead to job losses and weaken public broadcasting services.

Despite these challenges, New Zealand continues to offer a wide range of media platforms. These include traditional outlets such as metropolitan and regional newspapers, community publications, and magazines, as well as digital platforms that provide news and information to diverse audiences (New Zealand Media Council, n.d.). This diversity ensures that New Zealanders have access to a variety of perspectives, supporting a healthy and robust media ecosystem.

Further analysis of these trends and their implications for the future of New Zealand's media industry will be explored in Chapter Two. This will provide a more detailed examination of how media consolidation, government intervention, and the rise of digital platforms have influenced the industry in recent years.

1.2.3) Mainland China media sphere

The media system in Mainland China differs fundamentally from Western countries, resulting in distinct challenges for China compared to the New Zealand media industry (Luo, 2015). Traditionally, Chinese media has been tightly regulated by the government, with news reporting under strict oversight by state authorities (Brady, 2009; Zhu, 2022; Tong, 2010). This centralised control over information dissemination contrasts sharply with the more pluralistic media systems in the West, where diverse voices and independent news organisations play a larger role. However, the structure of Chinese media is similar to that of New Zealand, comprising radio, television, and newspapers as its primary components. However, the operating model in China is significantly more straightforward: all media outlets are state-owned and subject to government oversight. According to a profile by BBC News (2018), there are approximately 1,900 newspapers in China, with each city typically having its own newspaper, published daily by the local government.

Chinese newspapers are divided into several distinct categories. The first category is the *jiguan bao* (organ papers), which includes publications like *People's Daily* and various provincial party newspapers. The second category consists of trade and professional newspapers, such as *Wenhui Ribao* (Wenhui Daily), *Renmin Tiedaobao* (People's Railroads), and *Zhongguo Shangbao* (Chinese Business). The third category is metropolitan newspapers (*Dushibao*), such as *Beijing Qingnianbao*

(Beijing Youth Daily) and *Huaxi Dushibao* (Western China Urban Daily), along with other evening papers. The fourth category includes business publications like *Chengdu Shangbao* (Chengdu Business Daily) and *Jingji Ribao* (Economics Daily). The fifth category is service-oriented newspapers, such as *Shopping Guide* and *Better Commodity Shopping Guide*. The sixth group is digest papers, including *Wenzhaibao* (News Digest), and finally, there are army newspapers, with *Jiefangjun Ribao* (People's Liberation Army Daily) being a prominent example (Sun, 2002).

Unlike in New Zealand, where advertising is a major revenue source for newspapers, Chinese newspapers receive a smaller proportion of their income from advertising. Most of their revenue comes from subscriptions paid by central or local governments, as well as companies. Additionally, the media industry in China benefits from direct government funding.

As previously mentioned, Broadcasting Minister Kris Faafoi announced that the New Zealand government was considering merging RNZ and TVNZ to create a unified public broadcaster (Tennent & Worrall, 2020). A similar merger took place in China in 2018. Li and Zhuo (2020) argue that the main driver behind the Chinese media merger was the transformation of communication technology. The media now need to secure a competitive position not only within the national landscape but also in the global communication environment. As a result, the China Media Group was formed in 2018, consolidating different media types and strengthening China's competitiveness in the digital era (Li & Zhuo, 2020).

Yang (2020) reports an interview with Professor Song Jian Wu of Renmin University of China, a media convergence expert affiliated with the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China. Wu emphasizes that the success of merging radio, television, and newspaper industries depends largely on coordination between central and local governments. Without sufficient government funding to promote media integration, such efforts may worsen imbalances in media communication. For instance, some county-level media departments faced challenges related to outdated technology and inadequate integration of internet-based communication tools. In contrast, central media outlets and leading departments have leveraged advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 5G to innovate their practices,

including the development of digital platforms to meet the challenges posed by the internet era.

In China, radio and television are undergoing significant reforms. Beyond program content, most broadcasters have launched digital platforms and mobile applications, allowing audiences to access content anytime, anywhere. This convergence of media has been facilitated by apps like Dragonfly FM and Himalaya FM, where users can not only listen to radio programs but also enjoy stories, poetry, and prose, and even record and share their own content online. Thus, the merger of media organisations has led to some highly popular outcomes (Xu, 2017).

In the digital era, traditional media in both countries have been significantly impacted by the rise of the internet and digital platforms. However, there is limited literature that directly compares the mediascapes of New Zealand and China in this context. China is New Zealand's largest trading partner, with 58.3percent of New Zealand's exports by value in 2019 sent to Asian countries, and 28.8percent of those exports—worth approximately US \$11 billion—going to China (Workman, 2020). This close economic relationship has fostered increased communication between the two nations in other areas, including media and culture. Media, as a cultural expression of a country, plays an important role in these exchanges, but New Zealand and China have very different social systems and media landscapes. Thus, comparing the motivations and outcomes of media mergers in both countries offers a new and relevant perspective. Are their reasons for merging media organisations similar, or are they fundamentally different?

One of the key development goals of China's state-owned media following their merger is to embrace high-tech innovations, which could serve as a reference point for New Zealand's own media consolidation efforts. As will be discussed later in the dissertation, China Media Group is using AI, 5G, and other advanced technologies to deliver high-quality programming to its audience. Additionally, media mergers aim to enhance synergies between different outlets, improving resource integration and securing financial stability. This includes streamlining office spaces, consolidating journalistic teams, and increasing work efficiency. While both New Zealand and China share a common goal of seeking financial support and resource optimization

through media mergers, the differences in their social and media systems influence the strategies they adopt.

Luo (2015) identifies three primary roles of media in China. First, the media acts as a conduit between the government and the public, enabling the state to communicate its values and align public opinion with government narratives. This function ensures that media content reinforces government messaging and supports social stability. Second, censorship is viewed as a tool for maintaining professionalism within media outlets. By adhering to government censorship standards, media organisations demonstrate their alignment with state policies and objectives, bolstering their credibility as trusted actors. Third, media advertisers not only attract consumer interest but also build trust between the government and private enterprises, underscoring the media's role in advancing state interests.

This close relationship between media and the government means that media operations in China seek approval from state authorities, resulting in mutually beneficial arrangements that align with the government's goals. Li and Zhuo (2020) explain that the recent wave of media mergers in China, such as the formation of China Media Group in 2018, was driven by advances in communication technology and the need to bolster China's global media presence. The consolidation of state-owned media was intended to enhance their strength and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving digital landscape, reflecting China's ambition to assert its influence in global communications and align its media landscape with national interests on an international scale.

In today's omnimedia era—marked by the integration of big data, artificial intelligence, and cutting-edge technologies—traditional media, digital platforms, and social media in China are undergoing profound transformation (Li, 2023). Platforms like TikTok (Douyin in China) have reshaped the way information is disseminated, challenging traditional media models and influencing public opinion. As media increasingly spans multiple platforms, its role is evolving, with AI-driven algorithms controlling information flows and shaping audience engagement. Rejeb, Appolloni, & Treiblmaier, et al. (2024) reviewed these changes have created a dynamic media environment in which content is produced, shared, and consumed at unprecedented speeds. However, the Chinese government continues to exercise significant control

over media through its censorship apparatus, raising important questions about how these shifts are being managed (Rejeb et al., 2024; Su & Tang, 2023).

Social media, in particular, has had a transformative effect on China's media landscape. Platforms like Weibo, which had over 309 million users by 2010, have created an online ecosystem where news and information spread rapidly, often outpacing the government's ability to censor or modify content in real time (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2013). Although the government has attempted to regulate online discourse, social media platforms have given users new ways to shape public perceptions and political reactions, revealing the tension between government control and the organic flow of information in the digital age.

PhD thesis by Wang. (2007) concluded these developments in China's media environment also raise important questions about their impact on Chinese migrants living in New Zealand. It is important to recognize that not all Chinese New Zealanders come from Mainland China, and their media habits may vary depending on their region of origin. For instance, migrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Southeast Asia may be more familiar with media systems that are more liberal or commercially oriented, which differ from the heavily regulated media landscape of Mainland China. Although Hong Kong's media has increasingly aligned with China's censorship practices in recent years, Chinese migrants from different regions likely have diverse media experiences, which should be considered when analysing their media consumption habits (You & Munakata, 2024).

Understanding this diversity is crucial for examining how Chinese communities in New Zealand engage with media. While migrants from Mainland China may be accustomed to state-controlled media environments, those from other regions may expect a more open or commercialized media landscape (Chan & Spoonley, 2017). These different expectations can influence how Chinese New Zealanders interact with the ethnic media in New Zealand, including platforms like WeChat (微信), which is popular among Mainland Chinese migrants, or other regional platforms familiar to migrants from outside the PRC.

TikTok, developed by the Chinese company ByteDance, exemplifies how Chinese media companies are extending their global influence. Although initially a private initiative, TikTok's relationship with the Chinese government has raised concerns, particularly around issues of censorship and data privacy. While ByteDance operates Douyin under Chinese censorship laws in Mainland China, TikTok's international version operates under different regulatory frameworks. Nonetheless, the Chinese government's ability to exert influence over domestic companies has led to debates about potential government oversight of international platforms. TikTok's rise to global prominence highlights China's ambition to compete internationally in the digital media space, reflecting broader efforts to enhance the country's soft power and global media influence.

In summary, the transformation of China's media landscape—driven by technological advancements, media mergers, and government regulations—has far-reaching implications not only for Chinese society but also for Chinese migrants living in New Zealand. As media consumption habits evolve, it is important to consider how these changes influence the ways in which Chinese communities engage with both Chinese and New Zealand media systems. This discussion lays the foundation for further exploration of media consumption habits among Chinese New Zealanders, taking into account their diverse backgrounds and media expectations.

1.3 New Zealand politics and election

New Zealand's shift to the MMP electoral system in 1996, modelled after the West German system, marked a significant change from the previous Single-Member Plurality (SMP) system (Geddis, 2014; Vowles, 2010). This change reduced the dominance of the Labour and National parties, allowing for better representation of Māori groups and ethnic minorities (Geddis, 2014). It also enabled more political parties to develop distinct campaign strategies (Denemark, 1996).

The MMP system, as explained by the Electoral Commission (n.d.), involves a 120-seat Parliament where voters cast two votes: a party vote and an electorate vote. The electorate vote determines the MPs who represent specific constituencies, with each winning candidate securing a seat in Parliament (Vowles, 2010; Electoral Commission, n.d.). The remaining seats are allocated based on party lists, according to the Sainte-Laguë formula, which ensures proportional representation and prevents

over-representation by major parties (Freeman, 1977). Candidates elected from these party lists are known as List MPs (Electoral Commission, n.d.).

In the 2017 General Election, although the National Party received 46percent of the vote compared to Labour's 35.8percent, Labour formed a coalition government with the Greens (5.9percent) and New Zealand First (7.5percent) (New Zealand Herald, 2017). In 2020, Labour won 64 seats and 49.1percent of the vote, allowing them to govern alone for the first time in New Zealand's MMP history. However, they still chose to partner with the Greens (BBC, 2020).

Later chapter will investigate why Labour succeeded in the 2020 election and why some Chinese voters shifted their support from the National Party to the Act Party.

1.3.1) The policies of different political parties in the 53rd New Zealand Parliament

Labour Party

Labour's 2020 General Election policy was committed to containing the epidemic as well as economic recovery, and it promised provide financial support to cushion the economic shock.

National Party

The National Party was committed to rebuilding the economy and increasing employment, protecting New Zealand and its citizens and preparing for sustainable development.

Green Party

Green Party's policy was based on the principles of green politics, such as social justice, environmentalism and nonviolence.

Act Party

ACT's values were 'individual freedom, personal responsibility, doing the best for our natural environment and for smaller, smarter government in its goals for a prosperous economy, a strong society, and a quality of life that is the envy of the world' (New Zealand Herald, 2005).

The Act Party also provided a simplified Chinese language website for Chinese people to read:

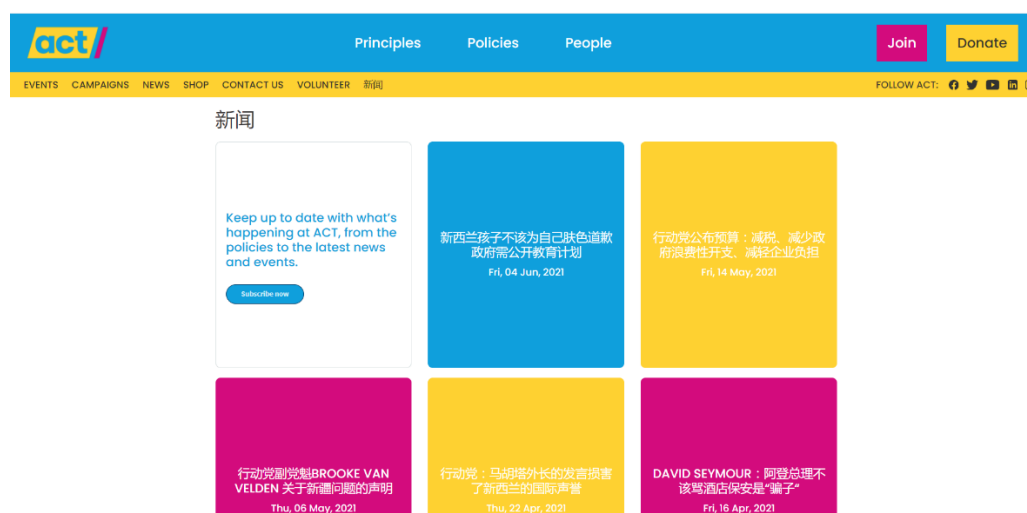


Figure 1. Simplified Chinese language website from Act Party.

It is interesting that in the 2017 New Zealand General Election, 70 percent of Chinese New Zealanders voted for the National Party. Three years later, this percentage dropped to 59 percent, instead the Act Party share of the vote rose by 6 percent (Radio New Zealand, 2020).

Māori Party

The party focuses on the well-being of the country and building a diverse, harmonious nation. It also focuses on issues related to Māori well-being such as health, housing, education and work.

Most Chinese New Zealanders are unaware of Māori parties and Māori policies because early immigrants have an inherent prejudice against Māori as criminals, lazy, do not work hard and living on welfare, and this thinking affects their next generation (Shui, 2020).

The literature about ethnic Chinese media in other English-speaking countries such as the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia indicates that they are similar to Chinese diasporic groups in New Zealand in terms of media consumption patterns.

For instance, in Canada, Bevelander and Pendakur (2009), who are associated with social capital research, claimed that media consumption is linked to political engagement, which means that people who access media turnout in higher numbers tend to vote. In addition, age, education level, marital status, length of time in Canada, trust in government, sense of belonging at the local level, and formal interaction all also influence voter turnout (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009. pp 19-22). Bevelander and Pendakur (2009) used the social capital literature as a base including socio-economic and social capital attributes. The 'Socio-economic' label is usually a combination of education, occupation, and income, referring to the social status or class of an individual or group. It also alludes to issues such as the unequal distribution of resources or power (American Psychological Association, n.d. para 1-2). Whereas social capital is the product of human interaction with the ultimate aim of bringing in benefit (Kenton, 2019).

In Australia, the degree of political participation is related to people's cultural background and secondly, to the fact that immigrants from an authoritarian state to a new country often develop an interest in elections. However, Asian turnout is low due to language issues (Bilodeau, McAllister & Kanji, 2010).

ABC (American born Chinese) can generally receive English information fluently and learn about current affairs without barriers. However, some Chinese students who later arrived in the U.S. and went to schools, colleges or universities and older Chinese migrants are more inclined to read ethnic Chinese media and entertainment from the motherland due to language barriers (Yang, 2018).

The online forum has provided a platform for Chinese diaspora in the UK to express their political demands (Parker & Song, 2007). Researchers will continue to explore the ethnic Chinese media in the UK in future studies. For the time being, Chinese in the UK have used forums to express their opinions, and perhaps they are in the same situation as Chinese diaspora in New Zealand - not speaking English confidently and wanting to know what is happening in mainstream society, but not having access to information. However, perhaps Chinese New Zealanders media consumption and political engagement in New Zealand is the same, partially the same or completely different from other English-speaking countries, I will find out later.

The development of ethnic Chinese language media in these English-speaking countries shows that the main service group is still non-English speaking immigrants (Bevelander and Pendakur 2009; Bilodeau, McAllister and Kanji 2010; Yang 2018; Parker and Song 2007). This phenomenon is the same in New Zealand that ethnic Chinese media primarily serve newly arrived migrants (Li, 2013).

People receiving information through a single media product or channel can develop a biased reception of information and an inability to form their own ideas. For the government, it is not possible to understand the needs of the people who do not speak English and the people in turn are not able to express their demands. This information asymmetry is known as the Information Cocoons (Hu, 2020).

1.4 Chinese New Zealanders political engagement

The political engagement of Chinese New Zealanders, especially in electoral participation, has been influenced by various factors. Historically, challenges such as language barriers and limited understanding of New Zealand's Western political system have contributed to lower voter turnout rates among pan-Chinese communities (Park, 2006). Contrary to expectations, Park's research did not find a significant relationship between socioeconomic factors and voter participation, highlighting that language proficiency and familiarity with New Zealand's political institutions play more crucial roles in shaping political engagement within this group.

Research has shown notable distinctions in the political participation of different Chinese subgroups. For instance, migrants from Hong Kong have been perceived as more politically engaged than those from Mainland China (Park, 2006; Li, 2013; Ip, n.d.), though this data is somewhat outdated and may no longer reflect current dynamics. A possible explanation for this disparity is Hong Kong's historical connection to British governance, which may have provided its residents with greater exposure to Western political practices. However, there is a need for updated research to determine if these patterns still hold true today.

The expansion of Chinese communities in major cities such as Auckland mirrors trends seen in countries like Canada and Australia, where ethnic enclaves such as "Chinatowns" have formed (Ip, 2012). These communities have also driven

economic activities, including property investment, which at times has caused concern among local populations. Despite their increasing economic footprint, early Chinese migrants were largely absent from New Zealand's political landscape (Li, 2013).

Li (2013) also observed that younger Chinese New Zealanders, particularly those who have grown up in New Zealand, display a stronger understanding of political participation, leveraging both ethnic Chinese media and mainstream English-language media to stay informed. This reflects a shift in political engagement trends, with younger generations showing greater competence in navigating the country's political system.

Several underlying factors continue to contribute to the political invisibility of Chinese New Zealanders. Butcher, Spoonley, and Gendall (2015) argue that cultural barriers, alongside perceptions among some locals that Asians are "taking jobs," hinder full political integration. While economic connections with Asia have strengthened, these lingering cultural challenges may still deter political engagement among Chinese communities.

In a liberal democracy like New Zealand, political participation is influenced by a combination of media discourse, public debate, and individual experiences. Chinese New Zealanders, like other minority groups, are shaped by these factors when forming political opinions and deciding to engage in the political process (Butcher, Spoonley, & Gendall, 2015). Both ethnic and mainstream media channels play a crucial role in shaping political awareness and engagement within this community, making media representation an essential component in understanding Chinese New Zealanders' political participation.

1.5 Research significance

This study presents an innovative investigation into the complex relationship between Chinese New Zealanders and right-wing political parties, situated within the rapidly evolving digital environment of the Internet Age. It focuses on the critical role of prominent social media platforms, such as WeChat (微信), which are extensively used within the Chinese diaspora, and explores the impact of ethnic Chinese media and their practitioners on political engagement. By examining these dynamics, the

research offers fresh insights into the ways in which digital technology and the ethnic media influence political behaviour in diaspora communities.

Moreover, this research also explores the connection between Chinese New Zealanders residing in New Zealand and indigenous Māori cultures, assessing how these relationships shape political behaviours and cultural identities.

In multicultural societies and democracies, the concept of representative democracy is paramount. Prior studies have established a correlation between the level of political participation among Asian immigrants and their educational backgrounds (Spoonley, Trlin, & Gendall, 2007). Building on this, my research focuses on the political engagement of the Chinese community, particularly in the context of the 2020 New Zealand general election. It examines voting behaviour and media consumption patterns within this community to determine whether Chinese New Zealanders are active participants or remain invisible in this vital aspect of democracy.

Chapter Three of this study will provide a detailed discussion of the research methodology employed and present the findings, offering insights into the political engagement of Chinese New Zealanders and the role of media in shaping their participation in the democratic process.

1.6 Mapping Dissertation

Chapter One: Historical and Cultural Foundations of Chinese Migration in New Zealand

Chapter One provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Chinese migration to New Zealand, setting the stage for understanding the broader context of pan-Asian and pan-Chinese identities within the country. This chapter delves into the concept of multiculturalism in New Zealand, with a particular focus on how Chinese New Zealanders are contributing to and shaping biculturalism in Aotearoa. The chapter also introduces the media landscape in both New Zealand and China, highlighting the intersection between these media spheres and their influence on the Chinese community's political engagement.

An important aspect of this chapter is the discussion of how different media systems in New Zealand and China impact the perceptions and political behaviours of

residents in both countries. Additionally, it explores the political systems of other countries from which Chinese immigrants originate, providing a broader understanding of the diverse political influences within the Chinese New Zealand community.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Chapter Two delves into the existing body of research related to Chinese New Zealanders, political participation, and media engagement. It critically examines previous studies and debates, constructing a robust theoretical framework that underpins the present research. This chapter serves as a foundation for understanding how Chinese New Zealanders engage with the media and participate in elections, using the 2020 New Zealand general election as a case study.

Chapter Three: 2020 New Zealand general election and ethnic Chinese media Study

Chapter Three presents the case study of the 2020 New Zealand general election in this study. It outlines the research design, participant recruitment process, ethical considerations, and the pilot study conducted to refine the research approach. Analysis of the results is also discussed, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research findings. The chapter also acknowledges the significant challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only affected daily life but also became a dominant topic in the 2020 New Zealand general election. This context is essential for understanding the political climate in which Chinese New Zealanders participated during the election.

Chapter Four and Five: Research design, methods and mixed research methods

Chapters Four and Five reveal the media preferences of Chinese New Zealanders and explore the reasons behind the diaspora's alignment with center-right political parties. The chapter also explains the mixed-methods approach used to examine the similarities and differences in media use and political engagement among Chinese New Zealanders. These chapters also discuss the perspectives of Chinese New Zealanders on their relationship with indigenous Māori culture and the Treaty of

Waitangi. By examining these dynamics, the chapters provide insights into how cultural and political identities intersect within the Chinese New Zealand community.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Chapter Six presents the conclusion of the research, summarizing the key findings and their implications for understanding the political engagement of Chinese New Zealanders. It also offers reflections on the broader significance of this study for future research and policy-making in New Zealand's multicultural society.

In summary, chapter One lays the groundwork for understanding the key components of Chinese diaspora, media engagement, and political participation in New Zealand. The author's personal experiences as a recent immigrant highlighted the significant presence of Chinese-language media and its role in shaping the political awareness of the Chinese community during the 2020 general election. This chapter introduces how Chinese media consumption, particularly through platforms like WeChat, influences political attitudes and voter behaviours in a predominantly English-speaking country.

The chapter explores the historical development of the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand, from early migration in the 19th century to the present day, emphasizing the role of the ethnic media in helping Chinese communities navigate New Zealand's bicultural and multicultural landscape. It also addresses the challenges Chinese New Zealanders face in accessing information and engaging in the political process, particularly given language barriers and cultural differences.

The discussion in Chapter One serves as a bridge to Chapter Two, which provides a comprehensive review of existing literature on Chinese diaspora, media use, and political participation. The literature review will critically assess previous research on the influence of the ethnic media on political engagement, drawing attention to the unique role that platforms like WeChat play in mobilizing voters during elections. It will also examine the gaps in the literature, particularly regarding the lack of studies focused on Chinese New Zealanders' political behaviours.

This connection between Chapter One and the literature review highlights the significance of the ethnic media in shaping political engagement among Chinese New Zealanders, while also underscoring the need for further research into how

these media platforms influence voter behaviour. The literature review will build on these themes, evaluating the strengths and limitations of past research and positioning the current study as a necessary contribution to understanding the evolving political dynamics within New Zealand's Chinese community.

Chapter Two: Chinese migrant, ethnic media and politics in New Zealand

Academic studies of Chinese New Zealanders have experienced significant development, shifting from a historical focus on their marginalisation and exclusion to a more complex analysis of their political participation, media engagement, and integration within New Zealand's bicultural and multicultural frameworks. This chapter synthesises existing research on these themes, emphasising motivations for and patterns of Chinese migration to New Zealand, the role of ethnic media in political engagement, and the effects of immigration policies on the societal integration of Chinese who are new to New Zealand.

This chapter critically evaluates how Chinese New Zealanders navigate the bicultural dynamics of a society where Māori and Pākehā dominate the national narrative. It explores the role of the ethnic media, such as Chinese-language outlets and WeChat, in shaping political behaviour and disseminating information. Moreover, it considers how global migration patterns have influenced the identities, integration, and political participation of Chinese New Zealanders.

Chinese migration to New Zealand began in the 1860s, spurred by the Otago gold rush, a pivotal moment in the country's demographic transformation. Over 2,000 Chinese nationals, driven by economic instability at home due to famine and drought, sought opportunities abroad, with New Zealand becoming a key destination (Ip, 1995). However, the influx of Chinese immigrants met with resistance from Pākehā settlers, who had already established dominance over the indigenous Māori population (Pool and Jackson, 2018). The enactment of the Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881, which imposed a poll tax and English language requirements, underscored New Zealand's intent to maintain a British colonial identity (Beaglehole, 2015). These discriminatory policies, lasting until 1944, exemplify the systemic barriers faced by early Chinese immigrants to New Zealand.

When compared to other settler societies, such as Australia and Canada, New Zealand's restrictive immigration policies mirrored a broader pattern of racialised labour controls in English-speaking colonies (Collins, 2002; Satzewich, 1989).

Although these exclusionary practices were eventually repealed, their legacies continue to influence current socio-political dynamics.

Despite systemic discrimination, Chinese immigrants made notable economic contributions, particularly in vegetable farming, a sector often viewed with suspicion by Pākehā due to the competitive pricing of Chinese products (Bohny, 2021). Between their first arrival during the 1860s gold rush and the Second World War, Chinese migration to New Zealand was severely restricted by the Chinese Immigrants Act 1881—which imposed a £10 poll tax and strict per-ship quotas—causing the community to grow slowly from just over 4,995 mainly male settlers in 1881 to under 9,000 by 1945 (Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023). Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2023) emphasized that it was not until the Immigration Act 1987 replaced race-based criteria with a skills-based selection system that Chinese migration increased substantially. By the 2023 census, people identifying as ethnically Chinese numbered 279,039 (RNZ, 2024). Nonetheless, Chinese growers pushed on with market gardening, carving out a niche that both bolstered local food supplies and provoked Pākehā anxieties about “unfair” pricing (New Zealand Business Roundtable, 2000). New Zealand’s bicultural framework—rooted in the Treaty of Waitangi partnership—has historically centred on Māori–Pākehā relations, often sidelining other ethnic communities. As Spoonley (1995) notes for New Zealand Herald that other ethnic groups often feel excluded from bicultural debates while Māori often feel marginalised in terms of the development of immigration policy. First-generation Chinese migrants therefore confronted not only overt discrimination but also cultural and linguistic obstacles that constrained their access to education and civic life (Bedford et al., 2007, p.158).

The integration of Chinese New Zealanders has been shaped by New Zealand’s bicultural framework, which historically centres on the relationship between Māori and Pākehā. This focus often marginalised other ethnic communities, including Chinese migrants, positioning them outside of the national bicultural narrative (Wang, 2018). First-generation Chinese immigrants also faced significant cultural and linguistic barriers, which hindered their integration into mainstream society (Du, 2023).

In recent decades, the concept of biculturalism has expanded to acknowledge the multicultural reality of New Zealand's population. Scholars argue that while biculturalism is vital for recognising Māori rights, it often overlooks the needs of other ethnic minorities. Chinese New Zealanders, in particular, must navigate the tension between respecting the bicultural framework and advocating for broader inclusion within a multicultural society (Murphy, 2013).

In the past two decades, scholars have called for a shift toward a genuinely multicultural paradigm. Fleras and Spoonley (1999) argue that “cultural pluralism in New Zealand was cast not as a social good, but as a constraining factor”. Smiths and Li's (2018) study of Chinese-language media in Auckland shows how Chinese New Zealanders negotiate both bicultural and multicultural expectations by drawing on community networks. More tangibly, New Zealand Chinese Language Week—launched in 2014 to promote cross-cultural learning—demonstrates clear benefits for Chinese immigrants in building language skills and forging partnerships with Māori and Pākehā institutions. These developments suggest that while biculturalism remains vital for honouring Māori rights, true social cohesion now demands institutionalised multiculturalism that embraces all of Aotearoa's diverse communities.

Critically, research suggests that New Zealand's monocultural institutions continue to privilege whiteness as the norm, often sidelining Chinese and other non-European minorities (Ip, 2009; Liu, 2007). This institutional monoculturalism presents ongoing challenges for Chinese New Zealanders as they seek integration into a society that is demographically multicultural but structurally monocultural (Baehler, 2009). Recent shifts in public policy, such as increased media representation and language policies, have opened opportunities for more inclusive practices, although these remain incomplete (Johnsen, 2019).

The evolving relationship of Chinese New Zealanders with New Zealand's bicultural framework can be seen as a continuous negotiation of identity and belonging. While biculturalism remains a cornerstone of national identity, there is growing recognition of the need for more nuanced approaches that reflect the country's multicultural reality (Smiths, 2019).

Ethnic media and political participation

Ethnic media plays a critical role in shaping the political participation of Chinese New Zealanders. Chinese-language newspapers, television programmes, and social media platforms like WeChat have become important tools for information dissemination and community engagement. In particular, WeChat has grown in influence, providing a platform for political parties to reach Chinese-speaking voters with campaign messages (Zheng, 2022).

Chinese-language media in New Zealand cater largely to non-English-speaking immigrants, providing both news from their home countries and localised political content. This helps bridge the information gap between Chinese communities and mainstream society (Li, 2013). For instance, both the National and Labour parties now use WeChat to communicate with Chinese voters, encouraging political participation (Zheng, 2022). This outreach has been particularly effective in engaging first-generation immigrants who face language barriers (Yang, 2018).

Historically, Chinese New Zealanders have had lower levels of political engagement, hindered by language barriers, cultural distance, and a sense of exclusion (Bilodeau et al., 2010). However, ethnic media have addressed some of these challenges by providing accessible information that encourages electoral participation (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009). Research indicates that those who engage with ethnic media are more likely to vote and participate in political activities (Duncan, 2014).

Ethnic media also influence political preferences. For example, media coverage of economic issues has contributed to the strong support for the National Party among middle-class Chinese voters (Chen, 2020). However, recent trends indicate a growing support for the ACT Party, which gained popularity during the 2020 General Election (Liu, 2020). This shift reflects broader political changes and highlights the continuing influence of the ethnic media on the political identities of Chinese New Zealanders.

The emergence of ethnic media, particularly within the global Chinese diaspora, is closely linked to the integration experiences of Chinese migrants in host nations such as New Zealand. These media outlets play an essential role in supporting these communities by delivering news and content in their native language, addressing their cultural preferences, and aiding them in adapting to the challenges of settling in a new country (Li, 2013). However, the development of "information cocoons", where

individuals predominantly rely on a single source of ethnic or language-specific media, can impede broader societal integration. Such media consumption habits may restrict exposure to diverse perspectives and contribute to the separation of ethnic groups from the wider political and social landscape, as highlighted by Hu (2020). Within the context of the global Chinese diaspora—including in New Zealand—ethnic media can act both as facilitators and as barriers to integration. While they help migrants maintain a connection to their cultural identity and provide critical information during early settlement (Li, 2013; Yang, 2018), exclusive reliance on native-language outlets can also contribute to isolation from mainstream media (Zheng, 2022). Such isolation may limit cross-cultural interaction and reduce opportunities for full participation in the host country's political and social life (Fleras & Spoonley, 1999).

Discussing the situations of Chinese migrants in other English-speaking countries is helpful, as they can offer a valuable comparative perspective for understanding the integration processes of Chinese migrants in New Zealand. By examining the experiences of Chinese migrants in countries such as the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, we can identify recurring challenges and patterns in transnational migration, including cultural differences, low political participation, and social integration difficulties. Since these countries share similar linguistic and political contexts with New Zealand, studying Chinese migrants in these regions provides insight into how the ethnic media influences community cohesion and social stratification. Such a comparison not only sheds light on common issues faced by Chinese migrants globally, but also helps to inform New Zealand's immigration policies, fostering more effective social integration.

2.1 Global Chinese Diaspora: Patterns of Migration and Integration

This section provides a brief overview of the global Chinese diaspora, focusing on the reasons for migration, experiences in host countries, and integration patterns. The discussion highlights the historical and contemporary challenges faced by Chinese migrants across different Western countries, drawing comparisons between Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Chen (1989) identifies three primary factors that have historically driven Chinese migration overseas. The first is conflict and war—most notably the Taiping Rebellion

(1850–1864) and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945)—which collectively displaced millions of civilians and prompted many to seek safety abroad. The second is labour shortages in neighbouring Southeast Asian border regions, such as Guangxi province adjacent to Vietnam; these shortages were especially acute during the post–Vietnam War reconstruction period (1975–1985), drawing Chinese labour across the border (Chen, 1989). Finally, spikes in labour demand in Western countries—illustrated by the Australian gold rush of the 1850s and the construction of the U.S. Transcontinental Railroad in the 1860s—created employment opportunities that lured Chinese workers to migrate overseas (Chen, 1989).

Ong (2013) noted that despite their residence in foreign countries, Chinese populations overseas have often maintained strong ties with Mainland China, particularly through political engagement, including voting, as a means of staying connected to their homeland despite differing social and political systems in their host countries.

Chinese Diaspora in Australia

Chinese migration to Australia began in the mid-19th century during the gold-rush era, closely mirroring Chinese settlement in New Zealand in the 1860s (Collins, 2002; Ip, 2005/2024). Both countries experienced significant influxes of Chinese labourers, prompting exclusionary laws such as Australia’s Immigration Restriction Act 1901—better known as the White Australia Policy—and New Zealand’s Chinese Immigration Act 1881, which imposed a £10 poll tax on each Chinese arrival (Commonwealth of Australia, 1901; Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023).

Yuan (1988), Choi (1975), and Collins (2002) classified the early Chinese diaspora in Australia into three primary occupational sectors: gardening or vegetable planting, operating laundries, and running cafés or takeaway businesses. These patterns were similarly reflected in New Zealand, where early Chinese migrants engaged in laundries, fruit shops, and gardening (Kidson et al., n.d.). Peter Chin, the first Chinese mayor of Dunedin, noted that Chinese settlers initially established these businesses as a means of survival and integration.

In New Zealand, stories like that of Moon Bin, who migrated from Canton in 1920 and started a successful laundry business, exemplify how Chinese migrants shaped

the country's social and economic landscape (TVNZ, 2023). In contrast, Chinese vegetable growers in Australia faced less discrimination than those in other industries, as their work did not pose a direct threat to local businesses (Collins, 2002). However, in New Zealand, Chinese gardeners faced accusations from Pākehā farmers of disrupting market prices by selling produce at lower costs (Kidson et al., n.d.).

Over the past century, the Chinese diaspora in Australia has broadened beyond Cantonese- and Mandarin-speakers born in mainland China to include ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan—often described collectively as “pan-Asian” (Ho & Coughlan, 1997). Today's community is equally diverse in migration category, encompassing refugees, skilled and family migrants, marriage migrants, and entrepreneurial investors (Collins, 1991, 2002). Reflecting changes in immigration policy and global labour markets, occupational profiles have shifted from labour-intensive industries toward professional sectors such as finance, computing, law, and medicine (Saxenian, 2002; Collins, 2002). Many recent arrivals bring substantial capital to establish businesses or secure high-paid roles (Collins, 2002).

While economic integration has been well documented, scholars have begun to chart Chinese Australians' civic and media participation since the early 2000s. Markus and Mares (2001) observe rising rates of voter enrolment and community-based associations, and Chen (2013) analyses how Chinese-language newspapers and online platforms shape political discourse. Zhao (2012) further demonstrates that coverage of local elections in Chinese-language newspapers increased from 18% to 30% of total content between 2000 and 2010, correlating with a measurable uptick in electoral participation among Chinese-Australian communities. At the organisational level, Lu (2015) highlights how advocacy groups such as the Chinese Australian Forum successfully lobbied for translated polling materials and multicultural policy roundtables. More recently, Lin and Huang (2018) show that digital platforms like WeChat and Facebook have facilitated virtual town halls and online petitions—efforts that have drawn thousands of participants and driven policy debates on issues ranging from multicultural education funding to migrant workers' rights. Together, these studies reveal a clear trajectory of growing civic engagement, whereby

Chinese Australians leverage both ethnic and mainstream media channels to shape and participate in Australia's democratic processes.

Chinese Diaspora in the United States

In the 1850s, the California gold rush attracted large numbers of Chinese migrants to the United States (Ma et al., 2003). Over time, Chinese culture began to integrate with American life, as evidenced by the spread of American entertainment such as music, Hollywood films, and fast food into Chinese daily life (Yu, 2018). The post-1965 immigration reforms brought a new wave of predominantly working-class Chinese immigrants (Yu, 2018; Chen, 2018).

However, Chinese Americans faced severe discrimination in the 19th century, similar to the experiences of Chinese migrants in Australia and New Zealand. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States, which aimed to limit Chinese immigration, coincided with the White Australia Policy and New Zealand's Chinese Poll Tax (Lyman, 1977; Ma et al., 2003). Lyman (1977) also noted that the Chinese diaspora in the United States differed from other minority groups, such as African Americans, whose presence in the United States was shaped by slavery.

As of 2021, there were approximately 5.4 million Chinese Americans, including those from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and individuals who identified as Chinese by ancestry or race (Rosenbloom & Batalova, 2023). Chinese Americans, like their counterparts in New Zealand and Australia, initially occupied low-skilled jobs in industries like hospitality, faced language barriers, and were often isolated from social networks due to the demanding nature of their work (Liang et al., 2018; Yu, 2018).

Chinese Diaspora in the United Kingdom

The Chinese diaspora in the United Kingdom numbers roughly 430,000, making it one of Britain's largest ethnic minority groups (Minority Rights Group, 2022). Nearly half of this population resides in London, with sizable communities also found in Manchester, Birmingham, and other major urban and suburban centres.

Integration experiences within the UK Chinese community are highly differentiated. Many first-generation migrants maintain strong cultural ties to Mainland China, preferring Mandarin-language media and social networks composed primarily of co-

ethnic peers (Huang & Lamb, 2015). In contrast, British-born Chinese often exhibit more hybrid identities and greater fluency across local media and social institutions. Key factors—length of residence, educational attainment, and individual migration trajectories—help explain these differences. For example, recent arrivals from the People’s Republic of China tend to report higher levels of patriotism and ongoing transnational engagement, which in turn shape their civic participation and voting behaviours (Fan & Ip, 2023; Nyíri, 2001).

These immigrant-native distinctions manifest clearly at the ballot box: those with stronger Mainland ties often vote in alignment with China-focused policy positions, while U.K.-raised Chinese are more likely to mirror mainstream British political trends.

Chinese Diaspora in Canada

Chinese migration to Canada began in the late 19th century, largely driven by labour shortages during the Fraser River Valley gold rush (Satzewich, 1989). Like their counterparts in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States, early Chinese Canadians endured discriminatory labour regimes—lower wages, harsh working conditions, and exclusionary legislation such as the 1902 Royal Commission–recommended Head Tax (Satzewich, 1989; Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 1902). Many worked as market gardeners, prompting European farmers to decry “unfair” competition from those willing to work longer hours for less pay (Beattie, 2019; Beattie & Boileau, 2020).

However, Canada’s political context also shaped these communities. The Head Tax spurred early forms of Chinese-Canadian political activism—petition drives in Vancouver in the 1930s and lobbying of the federal government to repeal exclusionary laws (Li, 2003). Following the 1967 shift to a points-based immigration system, new waves of migrants arrived—students, professionals, and family-class immigrants—bringing higher levels of education and political engagement (Teo, 2009). Recent studies document rising rates of naturalisation and civic participation: by 2016, over 85% of Chinese Canadians were Canadian citizens, and Chinese-language media and community associations played key roles in mobilising voter registration drives (Wong, 2018; Ma & Hiller, 2021).

Following the discussion on the global Chinese diaspora in other English-speaking countries, the next section will turn its focus to the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand, exploring both its historical roots and contemporary developments. Chinese migration to New Zealand began in the 1860s during the Otago gold rush, a time when European settlers (Pākehā) had already established a dominant socio-political presence. Similar to the experiences of Chinese migrants in Canada, those who came to New Zealand were also motivated by economic hardships in China, such as famines and droughts, which led them to seek better opportunities abroad. The parallels between migration patterns in New Zealand and other English-speaking countries highlight shared challenges and experiences among Chinese migrants across English-speaking countries. This comparison provides a valuable perspective for understanding the integration issues and contributions of Chinese communities. The following section will offer a closer examination of these dynamics within the specific context of New Zealand, analysing how these historical migration patterns continue to influence the experiences of Chinese migrants today.

2.2 Multiculturalism in Aotearoa New Zealand: Evolution and Contemporary Challenges

The Treaty of Waitangi, as Orange (2012) explains, was a foundational agreement signed in 1840 between the British Crown and the Māori people. This treaty established the British legal system in New Zealand while also recognising Māori ownership of land, resources, and culture. Today, it is regarded as New Zealand's founding document and remains central to discussions of biculturalism and national identity.

The University of Auckland (2011) highlighted the effects of colonisation on Chinese migrants living alongside Māori and Pākehā communities. The dynamic relationship between these groups has been complex, shaped by historical and socio-political contexts.

One area of cultural interaction that has been particularly contentious is the integration of Chinese language into te reo Māori. For example, Johnsen (2019) and Lanning (2022) discussed how Chinese greetings, like the Mandarin "ni hao ma?" 你好吗?, have been translated into te reo Māori, with the phrase "nīhaomā" becoming

a symbolic representation of cultural inclusion. Johnsen (2019) advocated for such translations, suggesting that they help bridge cultures and bring new perspectives into Māori traditions. This, he argues, respects the way ancestors might have considered contemporary global interactions. On the other hand, Lanning (2022) warned that such translations risk distorting the essence of Chinese culture and may even be perceived as discriminatory, as they impose one cultural lens over another.

Biculturalism and Chinese New Zealanders' Integration

Wang (2018) finds that first-generation Chinese migrants frequently experience a clash of core values with the dominant Pākehā culture—what she terms “cultural dissonance.” For example, Pākehā social norms of individual autonomy, low-context communication, and egalitarian informality often conflict with Chinese expectations of filial piety, high-context deference to elders, and a collectivist orientation toward family and community. At the same time, newcomers encounter Māori customs—such as *kōrero* protocols and the principle of *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship of land)—that can feel both unfamiliar and compulsory in civic or workplace settings (Du, 2023).

This isn't merely “barriers” in the logistical sense but reflects fundamental worldview differences that can leave migrants feeling alienated from both bicultural pillars. Murphy (2013) shows how these dynamics are compounded by the lingering association of “being a New Zealander” with whiteness. Ip (2009) further documents how, despite expanded legal recognition of Māori–Crown partnership, many ethnic minorities—including Chinese New Zealanders—continue to perceive themselves as outsiders in national narratives.

Multiculturalism, Biculturalism, and Monocultural Realities

Liu (2007) characterises New Zealand as a country that is demographically multicultural, formally bicultural, and institutionally monocultural. This unique combination creates both challenges and opportunities for social cohesion and public policy. On the one hand, New Zealand has embraced multiculturalism in terms of its population diversity, but on the other hand, its official bicultural framework—primarily centred on Māori and Pākehā relations—can sometimes marginalise other ethnic groups. As Baehler (2009) points out, this institutional monoculturalism can limit the

inclusion of diverse voices in public discourse, making it harder for Chinese New Zealanders to fully participate in national identity formation and civic life.

In navigating the intersection of New Zealand's bicultural framework and its increasingly multicultural society, Chinese New Zealanders face a complex set of challenges. Their experiences are shaped by historical legacies, socio-cultural barriers, and the ongoing tension between acknowledging Māori rights and including other ethnic minority groups. These dynamics reflect a broader global pattern observed in other English-speaking countries with sizable Chinese diasporic communities.

The following section builds on this comparison by exploring ethnic Chinese media in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Research shows that media consumption patterns within Chinese communities in these nations resemble those seen in New Zealand, with shared influences such as language, colonial histories, legal systems, and trade relationships. This parallel in media practices highlights how Chinese diasporic communities balance cultural preservation, integration, and identity across similar socio-political contexts. By examining these connections, we gain a deeper understanding of how the ethnic media impacts the local and global experiences of Chinese migrants.

2.3 Ethnic Language Media in Other English-Speaking Countries

Comparative research on ethnic Chinese media across Anglophone contexts—especially the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia—reveals strikingly similar consumption patterns to those found among Chinese diasporic communities in New Zealand. In each setting, first- and second-generation migrants rely on native-language outlets (print, broadcast, and increasingly WeChat and other social platforms) to stay informed both about home-country developments and local civic affairs (Zhang, 2015; Li & Fung, 2017).

Crucially, these media also play an active political role. In the United States, for example, Chinese-language newspapers like *World Journal* ran voter-registration drives and endorsed candidates in key swing-state primaries (Kennedy, 2016). In Canada, WeChat groups have mobilised community petitions around municipal planning issues (Ma & Fowler, 2018). In Australia, Chinese-language broadcasters

provided extensive coverage of federal election debates in Mandarin and Cantonese, shaping migrant attitudes toward party platforms (Chen, 2020). The United Kingdom's ethnic-press outlets similarly ran explainers on Brexit from a diasporic perspective (Wang, 2019).

These parallels are hardly coincidental: shared colonial histories, common legal frameworks, and intertwined trade relationships create comparable social-political contexts in which Chinese-language media emerge as vital channels for political information, discussion, and mobilisation. Understanding these transnational similarities—and the specific ways political content is framed in each country—provides a richer backdrop for analysing how Chinese-language outlets in New Zealand influence civic engagement today.

In Canada, Bevelander and Pendakur (2009) argued that media consumption is closely linked to political engagement, suggesting that individuals who frequently access media are more likely to participate in elections. Other factors, including age, education, marital status, length of residency, trust in government, and local community engagement, also influence voter turnout (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009). Their research is grounded in the social capital framework, which combines socio-economic attributes like education, occupation, and income, and social capital, which refers to the benefits derived from human interaction (American Psychological Association, n.d.; Kenton, 2019).

In Australia—much as in New Zealand, Canada, the UK, and the US—language proficiency shapes political engagement far beyond simply “learning English.” Political discourse uses specialized vocabulary (e.g. “preferential voting,” “first reading,” “royal assent”) and idiomatic expressions that even advanced learners may not grasp (Bilodeau et al., 2010). Official materials (ballots, party platforms, public-consultation documents) are rarely translated, so non-English speakers must rely on informal networks or ethnic-media summaries, which can distort nuance or omit critical details. Moreover, meaningful participation often requires confidence in public-speaking and writing—in legislative submissions, candidate Q&As, or community forums—skills that develop well after basic conversational fluency (Jupp & Kabala, 2017).

In the United States, American-born Chinese (ABCs)—those raised and educated in English—typically rely on mainstream media for news and public affairs, reflecting their native or near-native fluency. In contrast, recent migrants, such as international students and older arrivals, often struggle with the specialised vocabulary and idioms of political discourse despite meeting the IELTS 6.0 requirement for study visas (Yang, 2018). As a result, they continue to depend on ethnic Chinese outlets—print, broadcast, and social media platforms—where information is conveyed in a more familiar linguistic and cultural context. This divide between academic English proficiency and the registers needed for full civic engagement suggests that New Zealand’s current language thresholds for residence and citizenship may not ensure meaningful political participation. Furthermore, recent policy changes—such as abolishing English-language requirements for investor-class visas—raise critical questions about whether language standards should prioritise democratic inclusion over purely economic considerations.

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, online forums have provided a platform for the Chinese diaspora to express their political opinions (Parker & Song, 2007). While research on ethnic Chinese media in the United Kingdom is ongoing, these forums have become critical outlets for those who may struggle with English-language media but still wish to engage with societal issues. This mirrors the situation in New Zealand, where many Chinese immigrants may not speak English fluently, limiting their access to mainstream media and reinforcing their reliance on ethnic language media.

In Anglophone countries, ethnic Chinese media primarily targets newcomers with limited English proficiency—a pattern mirrored in New Zealand (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009; Bilodeau et al., 2010; Parker & Song, 2007; Yang, 2018). These outlets provide essential news, practical guidance, and community connections for recent arrivals (Li, 2013). However, longitudinal studies show that within five to ten years most immigrants acquire sufficient English and civic knowledge to diversify their media consumption: they begin by supplementing native-language sources with mainstream English-language news as their linguistic and political literacy grows (Bloemraad, 2006; Zhao, 2012). Consequently, while Chinese-language platforms remain vital for newly arrived migrants, they gradually become one component of a

broader, bilingual information repertoire that supports full integration into New Zealand's public and political life.

However, the reliance on a single media channel can create information biases and hinder the development of independent perspectives. This phenomenon, known as "information cocoons", highlights the risks of information asymmetry, where non-English speakers are unable to express their needs to the government, and the government, in turn, is disconnected from these communities (Hu, 2020). This creates challenges in understanding and addressing the concerns of non-English-speaking populations.

Ethnic Chinese media in English-speaking countries play a crucial role in supporting non-English-speaking migrants by helping them preserve cultural connections while adjusting to their new environments. However, this media also raises concerns about its influence on political engagement and access to unbiased information, a challenge observed in New Zealand as well. These concerns highlight the need for more research to understand the effects of media consumption and English language ability on the political and social integration of Chinese New Zealanders.

New Zealand's media environment exerts a fundamental influence on political socialization and public opinion formation (McQuail, 2010). Ethnic Chinese outlets occupy a dual position within this milieu: they furnish newly arrived migrants with vital linguistic and cultural resources while simultaneously engendering informational enclaves that circumscribe exposure to mainstream political discourse (Li, 2013; Yang, 2018). Under the Electoral Act 1993, permanent residents become enfranchised after one year of lawful residence—an enfranchisement provision distinctive among comparable Anglophone democracies (Electoral Commission, 2025). Yet, migrants frequently lack the discursive competence to navigate specialised political registers (e.g., "proportional representation," "select committee submissions"), impairing their capacity for fully informed participation (Bilodeau et al., 2010; Jupp & Kabala, 2017).

To address these deficits, integrated interventions are required. Bilingual journalism initiatives and professional translation services can mitigate linguistic barriers, whereas targeted media-literacy and civic-education programs can cultivate the analytical skills necessary for critical engagement with political content across both

ethnic and mainstream outlets (Bloemraad, 2006; Zhao, 2012). Exemplifying such an approach, Radio New Zealand’s Asian Unit delivers tailored English-language political coverage that enhances cross-cultural dialogue and promotes political efficacy among Chinese-heritage audiences (Radio New Zealand, 2024).

By examining the interplay between ethnic and mainstream media interventions, this study illuminates pathways for strengthening democratic integration and underscores the need for policy frameworks that balance economic objectives with the imperatives of inclusive civic participation.

2.4 The New Zealand Media Sphere

Mainstream media in New Zealand—understood as large-scale, commercial and public outlets that constitute the primary public sphere for political debate (Chomsky, 1997; Habermas, 1989)—operates alongside a vibrant ethnic Chinese press and digital ecosystem. Empirical work demonstrates that new Chinese migrants initially rely heavily on ethnic-language sources to interpret local affairs, gradually supplementing them with English-language reporting as linguistic and civic literacy develop (Li, 2013). Uniquely, the Electoral Act 1993 enfranchises any permanent resident after just one year of lawful residence, prompting major parties to deploy targeted outreach through Chinese-language radio, WeChat groups, and community newsletters (Duncan, 2014; Barker & McMillan, 2016). While such efforts can boost turnout, they also risk creating partisan “information enclaves” that may undercut deliberative quality and informed choice (Dahl, 1989; Theisen, 2017).

Duncan (2014) empirically demonstrated that the electoral behaviour of Chinese-origin voters in New Zealand is significantly conditioned by the composition of their media diets. Specifically, Chinese-language outlets exert agenda-setting and framing effects that render particular parties and policy issues more cognitively salient, thereby orienting individual voting intentions. Critically, the Chinese diaspora is heterogeneous: migrants from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia bring distinct politico-media repertoires that interact with local ethnic-media content to produce differentiated electoral responses.

Building upon this foundation, McMillan and Barker (2021) established a positive correlation between candidate visibility in ethnic media—quantified via column-inch

allocation, interview frequency, and depth of policy exposition—and both voter turnout rates and levels of party support. In the context of New Zealand’s Chinese-language press, the National Party’s systematic provision of columns and candidate profiles has demonstrably enhanced its recognition among Chinese-origin readers, translating into measurable electoral gains (Li, 2013; McMillan & Barker, 2021).

Within New Zealand’s Mixed-Member Proportional system, in which smaller parties can wield pivotal influence, it is imperative that ethnic-media platforms deliver a comprehensive spectrum of electoral information. Ensuring balanced coverage of both major blocs and minor parties will facilitate fully informed decision-making across all enfranchised communities.

Empirical evidence suggests that, although consumption of mainstream English-language news facilitates socio-cultural integration among Chinese migrants (Yin, 2015; Li, 2013), substantial proportions of Chinese and other ethnic minority populations report feelings of marginalization due to underrepresentation in national media outlets (Robie, 2009). Fleras and Spoonley (1999) have demonstrated that exclusion from the public sphere erodes minority group perceptions of political efficacy, and Parker and Song (2007) have identified a negative association between media invisibility and key civic participation indicators, such as voter turnout and community engagement. Consequently, the adoption of inclusive media strategies—encompassing multilingual programming, partnerships with ethnic community organisations, and equitable editorial frameworks—has been hypothesised to strengthen political knowledge and mobilise higher levels of democratic participation among Chinese New Zealanders.

Despite these insights, most research has focused on the media consumption habits of Chinese immigrants and their political engagement. For example, a 2018 survey revealed that more than 81% of Chinese respondents used Chinese-language media more than half of the time (Niche Media, 2018). This highlights a significant gap between ethnic Chinese media and mainstream English-language media, particularly in terms of engagement with the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand.

Rosenberg (2008) provided an overview of the New Zealand media landscape, categorising it into four segments: television, radio, Internet, and print. At the time he wrote ownership of these media outlets has traditionally been concentrated in the

hands of a few large corporations. For instance, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation controlled Independent Newspaper Ltd (INL), while the O'Reilly family, through Independent News and Media (INM), owned prominent newspapers like the *New Zealand Herald*. John Fairfax, another media mogul, owned *The Press* and was New Zealand's largest newspaper publisher at one time. In 2006, Fairfax also purchased Trade Me, New Zealand's largest online auction website, further expanding its media empire (Rosenberg, 2008).

In recent years, New Zealand's media landscape has experienced simultaneous consolidation and fragmentation. On the consolidation side, legacy players have come under foreign ownership and then retrenched: Fairfax Media's 2018 merger into Australia's Nine Entertainment placed Stuff Limited under Australian control, only for Nine to divest its New Zealand print and online titles amid strategic refocusing (Gibson, 2020). Likewise, Canada's Canwest exited its majority stake in MediaWorks' television arm in 2019 after sustained financial losses (Gibson, 2020).

At the same time, digital fragmentation has accelerated: a proliferation of independent online news sites, Substack newsletters, YouTube channels (including diasporic–community productions), and social-media outlets now compete for audience attention. The COVID-19 downturn intensified these trends, triggering closures or sales of several regional newspapers and mid-tier broadcasters.

Driven by shrinking advertising revenue—much of which has migrated to global tech platforms like Google and Facebook—this dual dynamic has steered both mainstream and ethnic media toward more commercially driven content, prompting concerns that their traditional social and democratic functions are being sidelined. It remains an open question whether Chinese-language media, which often rely on local community advertising and ethnic-business sponsorships, enjoy any insulation from the broader exodus of ad dollars to international platforms—or whether they too must pivot to new revenue models to sustain their public-information role.

Subscription-based platforms such as Sky Network Television's Neon have broadened New Zealand's media offerings, yet their programming remains overwhelmingly focused on entertainment and sports, thereby limiting their contribution to political journalism (Puschmann, 2017). By contrast, public-service and specialist outlets continue to dominate the political information landscape. The

2025 AUT Media Trust Survey reports that Radio New Zealand (RNZ) commands the highest overall trust rating (82%), a standing bolstered by its Asian Unit's bilingual news segments and youth-oriented documentary series (AUT, 2025; Radio New Zealand, 2024). Similarly, the NZ Listener has recorded a 10 percent increase in circulation, driven by its extensive political commentary, though its elevated English-language register may constrain accessibility for non-native speakers (Smith & Jones, 2024). Together, these trends illustrate a bifurcated media environment in which credible political coverage is increasingly concentrated within trusted public and ethnic-media channels, rather than within commercial pay-TV or global streaming services.

The development of ethnic Chinese-language media in New Zealand mirrors trends seen in other English-speaking countries, where such media outlets primarily serve non-English-speaking immigrant communities (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009; Bilodeau et al., 2010; Yang, 2018; Parker & Song, 2007). Ethnic Chinese media in New Zealand is vital for newly arrived migrants, but its role in shaping political engagement and cultural integration highlights broader challenges within the country's media landscape. Moreover, the ongoing concentration of media ownership and the rise of digital platforms add further complexity to the issue of representation and access to information for Chinese New Zealanders such as ethnic Chinese media launching WeChat Account under the WeChat Operation Standards. More detail will be discussed in Chapter Three .

This complexity aligns with the media landscape in China, where traditional outlets like television, newspapers, and radio have held prominence for decades. Since 2000, digital platforms have become significant channels of communication, although most media in Mainland China remains under state control. Recent reforms have introduced commercial pressures on these outlets, pushing them to generate revenue through advertising rather than relying entirely on government funding. The shift towards digital and commercially driven media in both China and New Zealand reflects a broader global trend of media evolution, influencing how Chinese communities interact with information and political life both locally and globally. This parallel highlights the importance of investigating the impact of digital media on representation and integration within New Zealand's Chinese diaspora, considering the influence of both domestic and international media developments.

2.5 Media Landscape in China

The media landscape in China primarily consists of traditional outlets such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines. Since 2000, the Internet has also emerged as a significant medium for communication. Most media outlets in Mainland China remain state-owned, but recent reforms have been introduced, as state media are no longer fully subsidised by the government. As a result, these outlets are now required to generate revenue through commercial advertising (Wang, 2012). Miao (2021) examines that in the main streaming media platforms in China, advertising is still the main source of income, accounting for 90% of the industry advertising revenue. .

In terms of income structure, advertising remains the most significant source of revenue for television, radio stations, and newspapers. Despite attempts to diversify income streams, such as through the production of domestic dramas and shopping advertisements, these new approaches have yet to become major contributors to media revenue (Wang, 2012). Traditional media programmes, known for their high production costs, often surpass the advertising budgets of smaller manufacturers, leading them to shift towards more affordable online platforms. Consequently, the competition for advertising revenue between traditional and new media has intensified, with fewer large manufacturers able to support traditional outlets through high-cost advertising bids.

Table 1 shows some top representative media outlets according to 央视市场研, China's largest market research and media studies company (2021).

Table 1 Top 10 China Mainstream Media Overseas Communication Power List in 2021

Rank	Name	YouTube	Facebook	X (Twitter)	Overall score
1	中央广播电视总台 China Media Group	93.92	100.00	97.18	96.12
2	人民日报 People's Daily	42.69	52.57	86.03	59.15
3	新华社 Xinhua News Agency	53.66	52.33	72.84	58.95

4	湖南广播电视台 Hunan Broadcasting System	70.98	40.96	41.09	51.50
5	中国日报 China Daily	41.01	55.64	54.32	50.12
6	上海广播电视台 Shanghai Media Group	53.48	41.52	41.80	45.79
7	中国新闻社 China News Service	42.26	40.85	43.01	41.99
8	上海日报 Shanghai Daily	40.10	40.00	42.06	40.65
9	观察者网 Guancha	41.51	40.00	40.54	40.69
10	澎湃新闻 The Paper	40.13	40.76	40.40	40.43

The inclusion of this list serves to provide specific examples of major media outlets in China, which helps to contextualise the broader discussion about the changing media landscape. By naming representative media companies, it illustrates the challenges faced by traditional media sources, which have historically been dominant but are now grappling with the rise of digital platforms and the increasing reliance on commercial revenue streams. This list demonstrates how these key players are adapting to new economic pressures, including the growing competition for advertising revenue. Additionally, it underscores the shift in media business models—from reliance on state subsidies to a focus on advertising-driven income—which is essential for understanding the evolving dynamics of China's media industry.

The state-owned nature of media in China plays a crucial role in understanding its development. While traditional outlets such as television, radio, and newspapers continue to dominate, they now face growing competition from digital platforms for public attention and advertising revenue (Luo, 2015). This transition, alongside the reliance on official Chinese-language sources for much of the available information about these media, highlights the difficulty in obtaining comprehensive and unbiased

perspectives on the Chinese media landscape (Luo, 2015; Guo, 2023). These sections collectively underscore the ongoing transformation of China's media industry, shaped by both state control and market dynamics, mirroring the global shift towards digital media (Guo, 2023).

State-Owned Media and Media Landscape in China

In China, state-owned media dominate across various platforms, encompassing television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. While some media outlets aim to balance or specialise for specific audiences, newspapers tend to score lower in public engagement compared to other media forms (Media Convergence Institute, 2022). Due to the limited availability of English-language resources regarding the media's role in China, much of the information about these outlets is derived from official Chinese-language sources.

Chinese state media maintain a concerted transnational presence in New Zealand primarily through the distribution of China Daily and the Xinhua News Agency's local feeds, which are accessible via university libraries, community centres, and official digital platforms (China Daily, 2024; Xinhua, 2025). These outlets systematically project Beijing's policy narratives—ranging from economic reform agendas and Belt and Road advocacy to cultural-soft-power initiatives—into diaspora networks, thereby reinforcing state-sanctioned frames of collectivism, national rejuvenation, and Party legitimacy (Guo, 2023; Luo, 2015; Nye, 2004). Empirical research demonstrates that sustained exposure to these state-owned sources correlates with heightened concordance between first-generation Chinese migrants' political attitudes and mainland policy positions (Yang, 2018; Li & Fung, 2017). In contrast, second-generation Chinese New Zealanders tend to engage in comparative media practices—critically juxtaposing China Daily's accounts with those of New Zealand's mainstream press—to construct hybrid civic identities that accommodate both homeland and host-country paradigms (Chen, 2022). Collectively, these findings suggest that overseas editions of Chinese state media operate as strategic instruments of soft power, their influence on diaspora political orientations being mediated by generational status and language proficiency.

Key Media Outlets in China

One of the most influential newspapers in China is The *People's Daily* (人民日报), the largest state-controlled publication. As the official newspaper of the Central Government, it had a global circulation of approximately three million in 2012 (People's Daily, 2012). *People's Daily* serves as a key source of information, offering insights into the Chinese government's actions and future plans. Its editorials are considered authoritative reflections of official government policies. For instance, speeches and activities of President Xi Jinping are regularly featured on the front page, reinforcing the newspaper's role in shaping public perception of state policies. In recent years, *People's Daily* has expanded its global reach by establishing a presence on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as Chinese social media platforms.

Another major media institution is Xinhua News Agency (新华社), China's highest-ranking media agency after *People's Daily*. Xinhua is regarded as a vital bridge between the Communist Party of China (CPC), the government, and the people. According to Xinhua's director, Hua Fu 傅华, the agency serves as a platform for conveying both government policies and public demands (Xinhua News Agency). While *People's Daily* focuses on spreading Chinese news globally, Xinhua operates as a news hub, providing content to domestic and international outlets. Xinhua has established partnerships with over 80 foreign news agencies, enabling it to exchange news and imagery worldwide.

Xinhua's Wellington bureau operates as a strategic node in Beijing's global news network, syndicating English- and Mandarin-language dispatches to diaspora-focused weeklies (e.g., *New Zealand Chinese Herald*) and supplying wire-service content—often under “By Xinhua” credits—to mainstream outlets such as *The New Zealand Herald* and Stuff (Guo, 2023). Through these partnerships, Xinhua's coverage of Sino–New Zealand economic, diplomatic, and cultural affairs achieves broad reach, effectively setting the agenda on bilateral issues within both ethnic and general audiences (Li & Fung, 2017). Its official WeChat account—boasting over 40,000 New Zealand subscribers—further reinforces state narratives by delivering policy explainers and curated cultural features directly to users' feeds (Yang, 2018). In addition, Xinhua's sponsorship of “China Week” events at several university campuses integrates party-sanctioned perspectives into academic and community

forums. Yet the actual impact of these interventions is mediated by generational and linguistic factors: second-generation and English-dominant Chinese New Zealanders routinely engage in comparative-reading practices, juxtaposing Xinhua reports with RNZ or *The Spinoff* coverage to negotiate hybrid civic identities rather than uncritically internalize state frames (Chen, 2022).

China Central Television (CCTV) is another of China's most significant media organisations, alongside *People's Daily* and Xinhua. As the dominant state-owned television network, CCTV operates more than 50 channels, broadcasting to over a billion viewers in six different languages. Its flagship news programme, *Xinwen Lianbo* (News Simulcast), is broadcast at 7:00 p.m. daily, and all local stations are mandated to carry this news programme. This programme serves as a critical platform for state announcements, policy discussions, and reports on the activities of state leaders.

The establishment of China Media Group, a conglomeration of Chinese state media outlets, aligns with the global trend towards digital media development. This consolidation concentrates resources to support traditional media during the shift towards digitalisation. Unlike in countries such as New Zealand, where private media entities operate, China's media landscape is entirely state-controlled. All Chinese media—whether radio, television, newspapers, or Internet platforms—are governed and if necessary, censored by the government's propaganda department.

Empirical evidence suggests that since the early 2000s, enhancements in China's national internet infrastructure have enabled centrally managed media conglomerates—operating under the China's Propaganda Department—to coordinate organizational mergers, reallocate resources, and deploy new digital platforms with unprecedented speed (Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011). Such structural integration allows simultaneous updates to editorial guidelines and technological functionalities across television, radio, print, and online channels, ensuring cohesive dissemination of policy directives. Crucially, these capabilities extend transnationally: Xinhua's Diaspora Service, CGTN's global feeds, and state-affiliated WeChat channels draw from a single content-production pipeline, guaranteeing that Cantonese-, Mandarin-, and English-language outputs convey consistent ideological frames to diasporic audiences in New Zealand and beyond (Li & Fung, 2017; Yang,

2018). Survey data from Chinese New Zealanders indicate frequent cross-platform engagement—via VPNs, diaspora forums, and second-generation WeChat groups—with news sources from the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, thereby amplifying integrated state narratives across multiple “homeland” networks.

China’s state-controlled media landscape is undergoing transformation as it adapts to the digital era. While traditional platforms such as television and newspapers continue to play a vital role, the rise of Internet-based media has brought new dynamics to the industry. The centralised control of media outlets allows the Chinese government to maintain a tight grip on information dissemination, while also facilitating quicker adaptation to changes in the global media environment.

Figure 2 China Media Group Multiple Platforms



Recent developments in China’s media ecology epitomize a global paradigm shift from legacy broadcast and print outlets to digitally mediated, user-driven platforms. WeChat (launched in 2011), Douyin (2016), and Xiaohongshu (2013) have risen alongside state-controlled broadcasters and newspapers, embedding themselves within the official propaganda apparatus even as they enable decentralized content production (Sun & Yu, 2022). These platforms’ interactive affordances—real-time commenting, sharing, and mini-program integration—contrast sharply with the unidirectional dissemination of traditional media, allowing users to co-construct political discourse rather than passively consume it (Osborne-Gowey, 2014; Sun, 2021).

In New Zealand's 2020 general election, WeChat Official Accounts and group-chat networks functioned as primary sites for Chinese-language voter education and candidate engagement, illustrating how transnational social-media infrastructures can mobilize diasporic electorates (Zhang, 2022; Bi, 2022). Yet these same affordances facilitate the rapid spread of misinformation, as seen during China's COVID-19 outbreak on Douyin and other platforms—an outcome shaped by the entanglement of social norms, algorithmic curation, and political objectives (Leng et al., 2021).

2.6 Social Media Platform WeChat During the 2020 General Election

Social media are Internet-based platforms that enable user-generated content and many-to-many, real-time interaction—upending the one-to-many logic of traditional broadcast and print outlets (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Chadwick, 2017). In this hybrid media environment, platforms like WeChat, Douyin, and Twitter not only accelerate news dissemination but also foster interactive community spaces where political ideas are co-created and contested (Valeriani & Vaccari, 2018). Surveys show that younger and diaspora audiences often rate social feeds as more trustworthy than mainstream media, which they perceive as constrained by corporate or political interests (Molyneux & Holton, 2015; Nielsen et al., 2021). Within Chinese-diaspora studies, Bi (2022) demonstrates how WeChat group chats mobilize electoral participation through peer-to-peer sharing of voter guides, while Zhang (2022) documents the parallel spread of misinformation and its polarizing effects. Together, these dynamics confirm that social media have not merely replaced traditional outlets but reconfigured the very modalities of information consumption, trust, and political engagement across both homeland and host-country contexts.

WeChat (微信), a social media platform with billions of daily active users, has become an essential communication tool not only in China but also among the Chinese diaspora around the world (Birkinshaw et al., 2019). Its widespread use has turned it into a crucial platform for connecting individuals, sharing information, and maintaining ties with those both within and outside of China.

Research into the use of social media among the Chinese diaspora, especially concerning the New Zealand general election, has revealed a gap in studies

focusing on WeChat (Hoyle, 2020). This platform plays an important role in political engagement, particularly within the Chinese community in New Zealand.

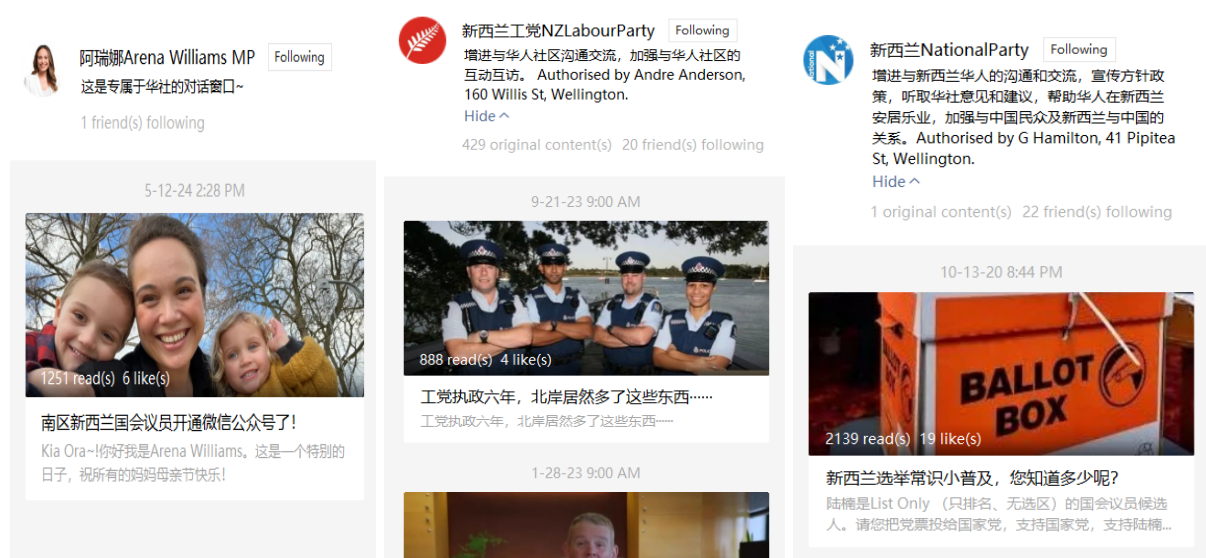
Zheng (2022) highlighted how New Zealand’s two major political parties, the National Party and Labour Party, have targeted the Chinese community through WeChat.

Both parties launched official WeChat accounts (微信公众号) to disseminate party policies, provide updates on current events, engage with the community, and share voting guidelines. This strategic use of WeChat has allowed these political parties to build a direct connection with Chinese voters.

Additionally, Naisi Chen, a former Labour Party MP of Chinese descent, used her personal WeChat account to interact with the Chinese community. She shared insights into her daily activities in Parliament, such as debates, legislation processes, and her role in economic development, science, and innovation, further fostering engagement with Chinese New Zealanders (Zheng, 2022).

In summary, social media, particularly WeChat, has become a key platform for political communication and engagement within the Chinese community in New Zealand, highlighting its potential to bridge gaps between political parties and ethnic minority voters.

Figure 3 New Zealand Politicians and Parties WeChat (微信) Official Account



In past studies about Chinese diaspora and the New Zealand general election it has been mentioned by Hoyle (2022) that there is a research gap on social media WeChat (微信).

National and Labour—targeting the Chinese community on WeChat (微信). Those two political parties launched the WeChat (微信) Official Account (微信公众号), releasing party policies, current affairs, events connected with the Chinese community, voting guidelines and so forth.

Additionally, Naisi Chen, former Chinese New Zealander MP from the Labour Party, launched her personal WeChat (微信) to engage with the Chinese community. She shared her daily life in Parliament, for example, debating, issuing legislature, and working on her own area of responsibility – economic development, science and innovation.

Following information from left to right translated in English:

Labour MP Arena Williams: 这是专属于华社的对话窗口。¹A platform to communicate with the Chinese community.

Labour Party: 增进与华人社区沟通交流，加强与华人社区的互动互访。Improve communication with the Chinese community and strengthen interaction with the Chinese community.

National Party: 增进与新西兰华人的沟通和交流，宣传方针政策，听取华社意见和建议，帮助华人在新西兰安居乐业，加强与中国民众及新西兰与中国的关系。To enhance communication with Chinese New Zealanders, publicise guidelines and policies, listen to the opinions and suggestions of the Chinese community, help Chinese New Zealanders to live and work happily in New Zealand, and improve relations with the Chinese people and New Zealand and China.

¹ The WeChat articles published by the political party or MP were originally in Chinese; the author has translated them into English.

Figure 4 *The Reason Why Politicians Operate a WeChat Account*

说到为什么要开微信公众号

当时在我的入职演讲里说到，我加入了一个最多元、最像新西兰的国会，同时我们仍然需要其他声音——例如持续发展并为新西兰一直在作出贡献的亚裔社区。我将尽自己的一份力量，确保他们更充分地参与到新西兰的民主社会中。所以我特地开设了微信公众号，在这里和你们交流，我真诚的想听到你们的声音，也十分期待把我的动态和思想和你们分享。我相信你们在一些华社的大型活动中见到过我，或者是一些中餐馆我们也偶遇过，下次见到我时，我期待你们叫出我的中文名字阿瑞娜。



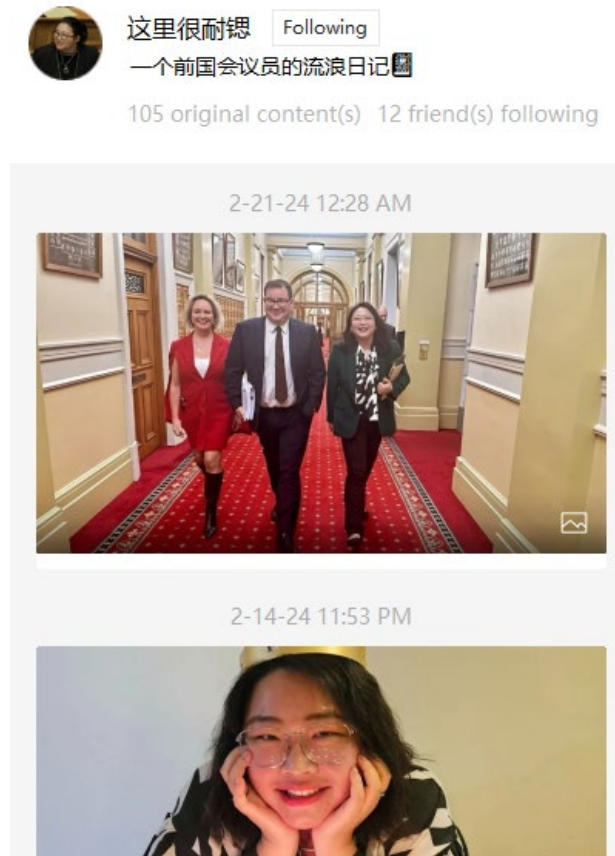
The reasons why Labour politicians operate a WeChat (微信) Official Account follows:

当时在我的入职演讲里说到，我加入了一个最多元、最像新西兰的国会，同时我们仍然需要其他声音——例如持续发展并为新西兰一直在作出贡献的亚裔社区。我将尽自己的一份力量，确保他们更充分地参与到新西兰的民主社会中。所以我特地开设了微信公众号，在这里和你们交流，我真诚的想听到你们的声音，也十分期待把我的动态和思想和你们分享。我相信你们在一些华社的大型活动中见到过我，或者是一些中餐馆我们也偶遇过，下次见到我时，我期待你们叫出我的中文名字阿瑞娜。

English translation: In my induction speech at the time, I said that I was joining one of the most diverse and New Zealand-like Parliaments, while we still need other voices—such as the Asian community that continues to grow and has been contributing to New Zealand. I will try my best to ensure that [the] Chinese community engage[s] with New Zealand's democratic society. That's why I've launched a WeChat (微信) Official Account to communicate with you here. I sincerely want to hear your voices, and I'm very much looking forward to sharing my dynamics and thoughts with you. I am sure you have seen me at some of the events of the Chinese community, or some Chinese restaurants

where we have met by chance, and the next time you see me, I look forward to you calling me by my Chinese name, 阿瑞娜.

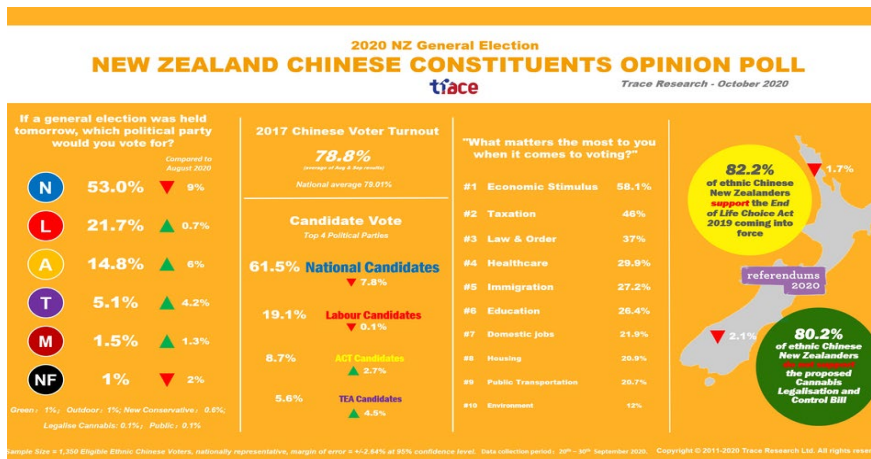
Figure 5 Former Labour MP Naisi Chen Won Her First Term at Parliament in the 2020 New Zealand General Election



As a social media platform, WeChat has become an indispensable communication tool, especially in the immigrant community in China. Osborne-Gowey (2014) pointed out that social media broke the slow and static limitations of traditional media through real-time interaction and user-generated content and changed the way of information dissemination. Dewan and Ramaprasad (2014) further mentioned that the rise of social media gradually replaced traditional media and became the main channel for many people to obtain information. The importance of WeChat is not only reflected in its function as a communication tool; as Carr and Hayes (2015) emphasised, social media provides users with instant and continuous interaction opportunities, enabling them to reach a wider audience, especially in the field of political participation. Foux (2006) believed that social media is considered to be more trustworthy than traditional media and occupies dominant position in information dissemination. This trust has also promoted the wide application of WeChat, especially in the Chinese

community. According to the research of Birkinshaw et al. (2019), WeChat not only plays an important role in China but also provides a platform for Chinese communities around the world to keep in touch across borders. For the Chinese community in New Zealand, WeChat has become an important medium for political participation. The interactive affordances of social media—characterized by real-time feedback loops and user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Valeriani & Vaccari, 2018)—have been strategically harnessed within New Zealand’s Chinese diaspora, with WeChat emerging as the principal conduit for political engagement. Former Labour Member of Parliament Naisi Chen utilized her personal WeChat account to disseminate daily legislative briefings, field constituents’ inquiries in Mandarin, and share insider perspectives on parliamentary proceedings, thereby transforming unidirectional communication into participatory dialogue (Chen, 2021). Simultaneously, major political parties have institutionalized WeChat Official Accounts and closed chat groups to distribute voter-education materials, host live Q&A sessions, and coordinate culturally tailored campaign events—effectively overcoming English-language barriers and enabling peer-to-peer endorsement within co-ethnic networks. Empirical polling by Trace Research (2020) indicates that these targeted WeChat interventions corresponded with the National Party securing approximately 53% of the party vote and 61.5% of the candidate vote among Chinese-speaking respondents in the 2020 general election. Collectively, these practices demonstrate WeChat’s dual role as both a social-networking platform and a potent instrument of political mobilisation, reinforcing diasporic collective identity, delivering authoritative information, and exerting discernible impact on electoral behaviour.

Figure 6 Trace Research—New Zealand Chinese Constituents Opinion Poll (October) 2020



Emphasising the role of Asian relevant research institutions, such as Trace Research. Trace Research is a New Zealand Asian relevant study research company, in political studies is crucial for understanding the political participation of Chinese communities, especially when these institutions are linked to specific political parties, such as centre-right parties. Key points include:

Trace Research’s findings show a clear bias towards the National Party, raising concerns about the institution’s research methods and results. As interviewees noted, although the specific methodologies are unclear, the results are evidently skewed in favour of the National Party, casting doubt on the institution’s neutrality. For a body tasked with objectively gauging public opinion, the fairness and transparency of its results are critical to maintaining credibility.

The association between Trace Research’s director, Dr. Zhu, and the National Party—particularly his role as an adviser to a former National Party deputy leader—exacerbates concerns about the institution’s ability to remain independent. This conflict of interest could potentially influence the research outcomes, particularly on sensitive political matters. As one interviewee mentioned, the fairness of an institution run by a former National Party adviser merits scrutiny.

Trace Research’s survey of the Chinese community in New Zealand indicates significant support for the National Party, with 53% of party votes and 61.5% of candidate votes (Trace Research, 2020). This demonstrates the impact on shaping political inclinations within the Chinese community. Understanding how these findings influence voter behaviour, especially in terms of party alignment and voter turnout, is a critical aspect of this research.

Trace Research serves as a representative of Asian-focused research institutions, reflecting the role of Asian voters in New Zealand politics and illustrating how targeted opinion polls can shape voter behaviour. Analysing the institution's methodologies, findings, and its ties to political forces offers deeper insights into the political participation patterns of the Chinese community and the influence of media and polling data. Thus, emphasising Trace Research's connections with specific political parties helps uncover potential biases and conflicts of interest in the study of Chinese community political participation, while also offering a broader perspective on the role of Asian research in political discourse.

What can we learn from political parties targeting Chinese diaspora using different social media platforms? The key connections are how political campaigns can influence voter behaviour within the Chinese diaspora, with potential biases and shifts in support reflecting the power of these methods.

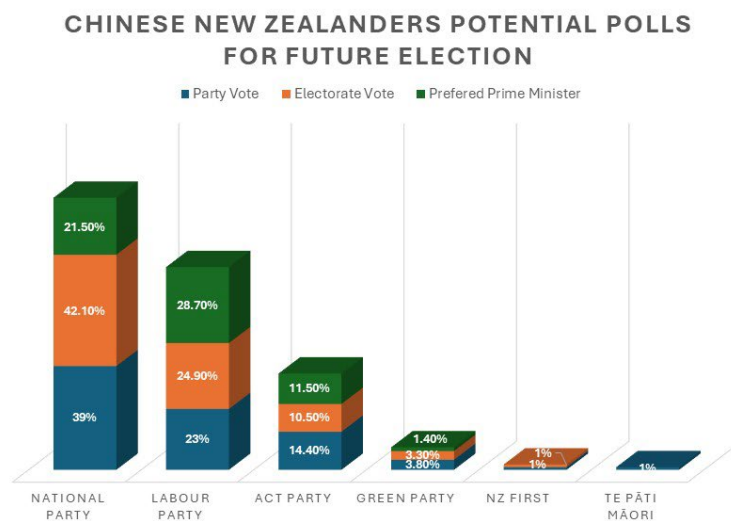
Targeted social media outreach and its effects on Chinese voter shifts

At the 2020 New Zealand General Election, a notable shift occurred within the Chinese voter base, with many switching their support from the National Party to the ACT Party. This shift resulted in a 34% increase in support for ACT compared to three years earlier (ACT, n.d.; Asia Media Centre, 2020; RNZ, 2020). Although the election was heavily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of Chinese voters still favoured the National Party over the Labour Party (Liu, 2020; Zhao, 2023). Liu (2020) explained this continued support as reflective of the long-standing allegiance of Chinese New Zealanders to the National Party.

An opinion poll conducted by Trace Research revealed that voter turnout among Chinese New Zealanders was 78.8% in the 2017 General Election, increasing slightly to 79.5% in the 2020 General Election (Trace Research, n.d.). However, the survey results also highlighted a divergence in opinion regarding National Party leader Judith Collins. While Collins received 52.2% support from the Chinese community as a party leader (Liu, 2020), only 21.5% of Chinese respondents preferred her as Prime Minister. The lower preference for Collins was largely attributed to the strong support for the former Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, who was widely praised for the government's COVID-19 response, attracting broad

backing from both minority groups and the mainstream population (Liu, 2020; Zhao, 2023).

Figure 6 Survey Results Regarding the Chinese Diaspora Voting Preference



Quantitative research indicates that the Chinese community in New Zealand has consistently shown strong support for the National Party. But what drives this preference? Several factors contribute to Chinese New Zealanders' alignment with National, including the party's focus on economic policies and business-friendly platforms, which resonate with many in the community.

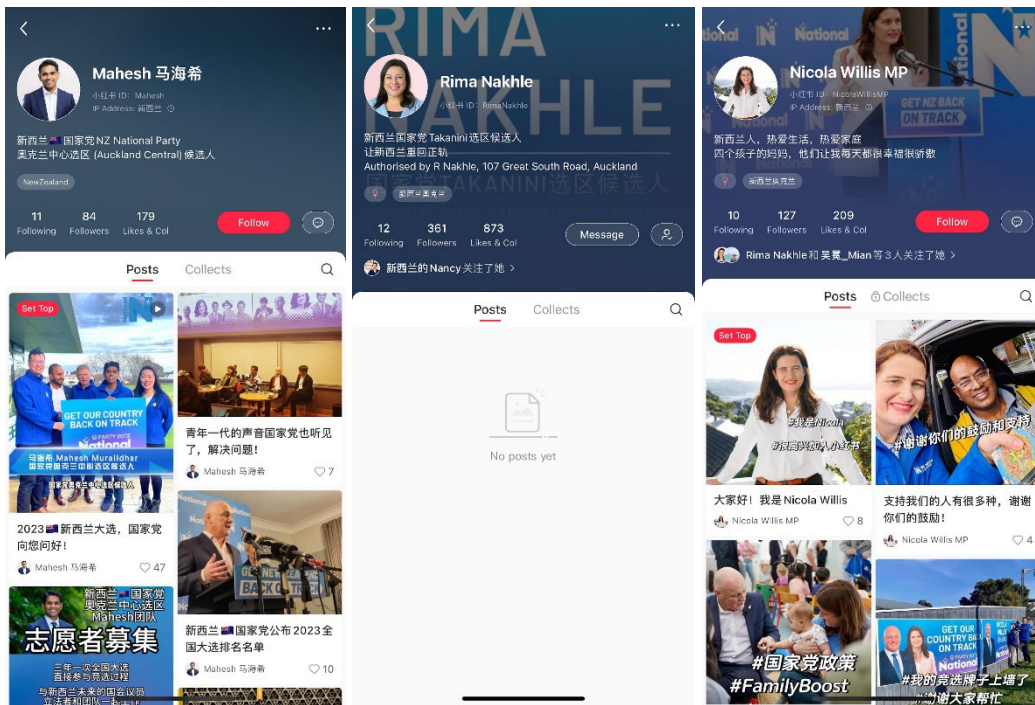
The 2020 New Zealand election was unique, with the Labour Party overshadowing others due to its prominent role in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, the National Party remained the preferred choice for many Chinese voters, underscoring their long-standing loyalty to the party.

Comparing the quantitative data with the findings from Trace Research strengthens the credibility of both sources. While Trace Research offers broad statistical insights, such as overall support for the National Party, this study may provide more detailed perspectives, such as voter behaviour broken down by age, gender, or socioeconomic status. This comparison enables a deeper understanding of the nuanced voting behaviours within the Chinese community, something that a single study might not fully capture. Given the criticism directed at Trace Research for potential bias towards the National Party, comparing their results with more independent academic research can help evaluate how this bias may affect the reported outcomes, emphasising the critical need for neutral and transparent research practices.

Inclusive Social Media in the Chinese community

Figure 7 National Party Candidates Targeting the Chinese Community at the 2023 General Election on Little Red Book (小红书)





Previous research has primarily focused on the use of traditional and digital media among ethnic Chinese communities. However, there has been a noticeable shift towards social media platforms, particularly WeChat (微信) and, more recently, Little Red Book (小红书), which have become increasingly popular within the Chinese community.

In past election campaigns, ethnic Chinese voters were typically reached through traditional and digital media channels, including newspapers, radio, and television. In recent years, however, there has been a significant move towards social media platforms, which allow for more interactive and direct communication. WeChat, already well-established among the Chinese diaspora, and Little Red Book, a newer but rapidly growing platform, have emerged as essential tools for political engagement. The National Party has strategically leveraged these platforms to connect with Chinese voters.

Little Red Book (小红书) is a social commerce platform that blends user-generated content with e-commerce, making it particularly appealing to younger Chinese users. Many of these users turn to the platform for lifestyle advice, shopping, and social networking. Recognising its potential, the National Party used Little Red Book to engage with younger, tech-savvy members of the Chinese community who are increasingly immersed in social media.

By focusing its outreach on Little Red Book, the National Party could craft tailored messages that aligned with the values and concerns of this specific demographic. The platform's focus on user-driven content also allowed the party to deliver culturally relevant and localised messaging, which likely contributed to its success in connecting with younger Chinese voters.

The shift towards social media during the 2023 New Zealand General Election reflects the changing dynamics of political campaigns, with platforms like WeChat and Little Red Book emerging as crucial tools for engaging diverse voter groups, such as the Chinese community. This evolution is indicative of broader changes in media consumption, where traditional media's influence is diminishing and more personalised, immediate interactions on social media are becoming essential. This trend underscores the growing significance of reaching out to diverse communities through the platforms they regularly use.

The National Party's success in the 2023 election can be partly attributed to its strategic use of these social media platforms to engage specific voter groups, including the Chinese community. By employing culturally sensitive and targeted messaging on platforms like Little Red Book, the party showcased its ability to adapt to the changing communication landscape and connect effectively with key demographics.

New Zealand's political history, as described by King (2003) and Hayward et al. (2021), is "Janus-faced", highlighting its dual focus on Māori and Pākehā populations. This concept encapsulates the country's complex identity, shaped by the intertwined histories and cultures of its indigenous Māori people and its predominantly European Pākehā population. Similarly, the increasing importance of engaging minority groups, such as Chinese voters, through tailored social media strategies reflects an extension of New Zealand's ongoing efforts towards representation and participation in its evolving political landscape.

2.7 New Zealand's Political History: Biculturalism, Representation, and Participation

Pākehā, referring primarily to New Zealanders of European descent, make up 67.8% of the country's population as of 2024 (Stats NZ ; RNZ, 2024). Historically, the term

Pākehā, first used in 1815, specifically referred to white settlers in New Zealand (McLintock, 1966). However, contemporary definitions have broadened to include individuals from various cultural backgrounds, not solely of European origin (Marcetic, 2018). This change in the term's meaning can be attributed to various factors, including linguistic shifts, cultural blending, and evolving ideologies.

Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, have continuously fought to protect their sovereignty and self-determination since colonisation began (Hayward et al., 2021). Colonisation in New Zealand, as described by Hayward et al. (2021), involved both the imposition of foreign political rule and the dispossession of Māori lands and resources. The concept of colonisation, defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is the act of sending settlers to govern another country, takes on specific meaning in New Zealand's context, where it also led to significant cultural and societal changes.

The Māori resurgence in political strength has been particularly evident under Labour's recent governance, where Māori political engagement, especially among the working class, has intensified (Edwards, 2023).

New Zealand was the first country in the world to implement universal suffrage (Sibley & Wilson, 2007). The introduction of the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) voting system in 1996, modelled after the West German system, marked a significant shift in New Zealand's political landscape. One major advantage of the MMP system is that it weakened the two-party dominance of Labour and National, allowing for more representation of Māori groups and ethnic minorities (Geddis, 2014). Additionally, MMP has enabled a wider range of political parties to develop diverse campaign strategies (Denemark, 1996).

Geddis (2014) explained that two public referendums preceded the shift to MMP. In the 1992 referendum, 71% of voters supported MMP from 55% of registered voters, and in 1993, during the general election, 53.9% of voters chose MMP over the previous First-Past-The-Post (FPP) system, leading to the Electoral Act of 1993.

Boston (2011) highlights four key benefits of the MMP system:

1. It allows for more robust debate between ruling and opposition parties.
2. It limits the power of the Prime Minister.

3. It supports more inclusive policymaking by representing a broader range of viewpoints in Parliament.
4. It enhances the efficiency of government operations.

The MMP system, as explained by the Electoral Commission (n.d.), allocates 120 seats in Parliament, with voters casting two votes: one for a political party and one for an electorate candidate. The party vote determines the overall composition of Parliament, while electorate votes are cast for candidates within specific geographic areas. Parties aim to secure as many seats as possible, with smaller parties needing to capture at least 5% of the party vote or win an electorate seat to gain representation. After the election, political parties negotiate to form coalition governments, as demonstrated in the 2017 and 2020 general elections.

In 2017, despite the National Party winning 46% of the vote compared to Labour's 35.8%, Labour formed a coalition government with the Green Party (5.9%) and New Zealand First (7.5%) (New Zealand Herald, 2017). The 2020 election was historic, as Labour secured a majority with 64 seats and 49.1% of the vote, the first time a single party could govern alone. However, Labour still chose to partner with the Green Party to form a coalition (BBC, 2020).

This research will analyse the factors behind Labour's 2020 electoral success and explore why some Chinese New Zealanders shifted their support from the National Party to the ACT Party during that election. By examining voting trends and political engagement within ethnic communities, this study aims to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of New Zealand's MMP system and its impact on minority voters.

2.8 Minority Political Engagement: Barriers and Opportunities

Chen and Li (2008) identify five distinct forms of political participation:

Voting is the primary form of personal political engagement, but other activities include fundraising, attending hearings, filing public complaints, and submitting proposals. Group participation, on the other hand, refers to involvement in political parties.

Active engagement involves direct participation in political activities, whereas passive engagement involves minimal interaction with the political process.

Representative democracy is where elected officials make decisions on behalf of the people, while direct democracy allows individuals to participate in decision-making processes themselves.

This distinction involves engagement in political processes that either adhere to or violate the law.

Stabilised engagement refers to consistent and predictable political involvement, whereas uncertain engagement may fluctuate based on circumstances.

Two Benefits of Community Involvement in Politics:

Every individual and ethnic community brings unique values, beliefs, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds to the table. Political involvement allows individuals to engage with and learn from the intersection of different cultures and ideas, thereby appreciating the strengths of various communities.

Immigrant and ethnic minority communities make up a significant proportion of the electorate. Their participation is crucial in shaping both the electorate and party vote (Dunn, 1977; Spoonley, 2020).

For new immigrants, particularly those arriving in New Zealand, understanding the electoral process and voting options is essential. Migrants tend to become more engaged in electoral activities upon moving to Western democracies. The media plays a critical "watchdog" role during elections, providing voters with essential information. Through media coverage, immigrants can access accurate details about electoral processes, party policies, and key political issues, enabling them to make informed voting decisions (ACE Electoral Knowledge Network, 2012; Norris, 2000; Bilodeau et al., 2010).

There is a clear connection between ethnic media, politics, and electoral behaviour. Ethnic media, by providing information in the native languages of minority communities, serves as a vital resource for immigrants who need accessible, understandable information to participate in elections (McMillan & Barker, 2021).

According to the Queensland Parliament (2015), the media plays three crucial roles in the political sphere:

- Communicating government decisions

- Facilitating discussions about government resolutions
- Providing a platform for decision-makers to address the public.

Ethnic media not only delivers news to minority communities but also provides essential information about government decisions, allowing new residents and citizens to understand the rationale behind policy choices.

Ethnic minority news rarely receives coverage in mainstream English-language media, and newsrooms often fail to include a wide range of stories reflecting diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Māori and other minority communities (Smale, 2019). In fields like film, both Pākehā and Māori cultures are frequently represented on screen, while Asian representation is notably limited (Zalipour, 2015). The ethnic media help fill this gap by raising awareness of ethnic issues and offering coverage that is often overlooked by mainstream outlets (McMillan & Barker, 2021).

This chapter has examined the political, social, and media engagement of Chinese New Zealanders, highlighting the transition from early experiences of marginalisation to more active participation in New Zealand's bicultural and multicultural systems. Through a review of existing literature, this chapter emphasised key themes including Chinese migration to New Zealand, the role of ethnic media in shaping political participation, and the influence of immigration policies on social integration.

A central focus was on how Chinese New Zealanders navigate the bicultural framework, which primarily centres on Māori and Pākehā populations, and how this dynamic affects their social positioning. Ethnic media, such as Chinese-language outlets and platforms like WeChat, has emerged as critical in bridging information gaps and fostering political engagement. In particular, WeChat has become a vital tool for political communication, enabling direct interaction between political parties and Chinese voters.

The historical overview of Chinese migration to New Zealand detailed the early challenges of exclusion and systemic discrimination, but also recognised the more recent liberalisation of immigration policies, which have facilitated greater political involvement for Chinese communities. However, the chapter noted that institutional

monoculturalism continues to privilege whiteness, often leaving Chinese and other minority groups at the margins of mainstream national narratives.

This review also explored how platforms like WeChat and Little Red Book have shifted political engagement strategies, particularly during elections. These platforms enable political parties to reach Chinese voters in more culturally relevant and personalised ways. Historically, Chinese New Zealanders have shown strong support for the National Party, but recent trends indicate a growing alignment with the ACT Party, reflecting broader changes in political behaviour.

The chapter further introduced Chen and Li's (2008) framework on political participation, which categorises different forms of engagement, such as active vs. passive and stabilised vs. uncertain engagement. This framework provides insight into the complex ways Chinese New Zealanders engage politically, highlighting how their participation is influenced by economic and social factors.

The role of ethnic Chinese-language media in New Zealand's political landscape, particularly during election periods, has garnered significant academic interest. This chapter examines the findings of various studies, including Li's (2013) Ph.D. research, which later became a published book, and the work of other scholars like Wang and Guo (2011) and McMillan and Barker (2021). These studies explored the characteristics, challenges, and biases within ethnic Chinese-language media, as well as their impact on the political engagement of Chinese New Zealanders.

Li's (2013) research offered a detailed examination of the ethnic Chinese-language media, identifying new immigrants as the primary audience. The study highlighted that these media outlets are predominantly privatised, with no specific media approval system, and are heavily reliant on part-time staff (Wang & Guo, 2011). The content is mainly tailored to the local Chinese community, using both simplified and traditional Chinese characters, and focuses on community news and Chinese policy information. Reports on mainstream New Zealand society are often direct translations from English-language media, limiting the scope for original reporting and critical analysis.

A significant finding from Li's (2013) study is the heavy dependence of ethnic Chinese-language media on advertising revenue. This dependence leads to a content landscape dominated by advertisements, overshadowing other forms of

reporting. The private nature of these media outlets means that operators, even if willing, face substantial challenges in altering this status quo. These challenges include limited funding, the necessity of interacting with mainstream English-language media, and the lack of specialised training institutions for journalists working in ethnic Chinese media.

Li's research also delved into the media consumption habits and political engagement of Chinese and Korean immigrants in New Zealand. Upon arrival, these immigrants prioritise settling into their new environment, securing employment, and enrolling their children in school, with political participation often considered a secondary concern. Li's findings suggested that Chinese media's coverage of the political landscape is not comprehensive, with a noticeable bias towards parties with Chinese candidates, such as the National Party and the ACT Party. This bias was evident in radio programmes and newspaper content, where some hosts openly expressed support for the National Party, leading to listener complaints. There was also a significant portion of the audience that wanted information on smaller parties but faced barriers due to language limitations. Additionally, the 2005 election saw ethnic Chinese media dominated by advertisements for the National and ACT parties.

A comprehensive analysis of the New Zealand general elections in 2008, 2011, and 2014 revealed a consistent bias in ethnic Chinese-language media coverage towards the National Party. National Party MP Jian Yang often featured prominently in these media outlets, while negative news about the New Zealand First Party was frequently highlighted (Hoyle, 2020). McMillan and Barker (2021) confirmed these findings, noting that ethnic Chinese-language media generally provided more coverage of the National Party and its leaders than of the Labour Party, although Labour's policy coverage did outnumber that of the National Party.

Understanding the influence of ethnic Chinese and mainstream English-language media on the voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders is crucial. If media coverage significantly impacts this demographic, it would validate concerns about the role of media in shaping voting patterns. Conversely, if media plays a limited role, other factors such as a lack of trust in media or a diminished sense of civic duty might explain the historically low voter turnout among Chinese New Zealanders

(Barker & McMillan, 2017). Despite targeted political advertising through ethnic Chinese media during election campaigns, this does not seem to significantly motivate Chinese New Zealanders to vote (Li, 2013). Political engagement is vital for the ruling party to understand the electorate's needs and to give voice to the community. For migrants who do not speak English, ethnic media plays a critical role in providing election information in their native language, aiding their integration into New Zealand society.

The research discussed in this chapter primarily employs quantitative methods, but there is a growing recognition of the value of mixed methods research, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This chapter itself applies a mixed methods approach to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Mixed methods research, increasingly used in fields like sociology, psychology, and education, involves collecting and analysing both qualitative and quantitative data through various methods, including surveys, interviews, and content analysis. This approach allows for triangulation of data and perspectives, improving the validity and reliability of findings, and generating a more nuanced understanding of the research problem.

The analysis of political participation within the Chinese community in New Zealand offers valuable insights into the factors influencing electoral engagement and the role of the ethnic media in shaping political discourse. The findings underscore the importance of considering both the content and structure of ethnic Chinese-language media when assessing its impact on the political landscape. As New Zealand's media environment continues to evolve, the role of ethnic media will remain a critical area of study for understanding the broader dynamics of political engagement among immigrant communities.

The study of diaspora, media use, and political engagement involves various theoretical perspectives that provide insight into the complex dynamics at play. This chapter explores the key theories that underpin the analysis of Chinese New Zealanders' political engagement, particularly in relation to their media consumption habits. These theories have been instrumental in shaping the understanding of how diasporic communities interact with the political landscape of their host countries.

In conclusion, the literature review underscores the importance of ethnic media in enhancing political engagement and emphasises the need for more inclusive policies that address the challenges faced by Chinese New Zealanders within a multicultural yet predominantly bicultural society. This sets the foundation for further research into how political parties and institutions can better engage with Chinese communities, ensuring greater representation and participation in New Zealand's political landscape.

The next chapter will explore the 2020 New Zealand General Election, focusing on the use of Chinese language media and political parties targeting the Chinese community. It will also examine how previous scholars have explored related research, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of those studies and outlining the innovations introduced in this research.

Chapter Three Chinese New Zealanders and Political Engagement in New Zealand's General Elections

This chapter examines how Chinese descent candidates were portrayed across different media platforms during the 2020 New Zealand general election. Building on the political landscape outlined in earlier chapters, it aims to explore the relationship between political representation and media narratives, particularly focusing on issues of ethnicity, party affiliation, and perceived loyalty.

The 2020 election marked a notable moment in New Zealand politics, not only because it took place during the middle of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, but also because of the increasing visibility of candidates from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Chinese New Zealanders. This chapter compares media coverage from mainstream, ethnic, and alternative sources to identify patterns, framing techniques, and potential biases.

Before delving into the case study, a brief contextual overview of Chinese descent MPs in New Zealand is presented to highlight historical underrepresentation and set the stage for media analysis.

3.1 New Zealand's Historical Chinese MPs

As outlined in Chapter One (Table 2), Chinese descent MPs have historically been underrepresented in New Zealand Parliament despite the significant size of the Chinese population. Since the introduction of the MMP system in 1996, only a handful of Chinese descent politicians have served in Parliament, mostly through party lists rather than electorate seats.

Pansy Wong (National) was the first and longest-serving Chinese descent MP, holding the Botany electorate from 1996–2011. Most others, such as Jian Yang, Raymond Huo, and Kenneth Wang, served as list MPs. Notably, recent figures like Nancy Lu (National), Carlos Cheung (National), and Lawrence Xu (Greens) suggest a new wave of Chinese political presence.

However, this presence has not come without controversy. Jian Yang's alleged links to Chinese military institutions, widely covered in the media, raised public questions around foreign influence and trust. These cases suggest that representation alone does not guarantee acceptance; rather, Chinese descent MPs often navigate heightened scrutiny and conditional legitimacy in public discourse. This context is important for understanding the media narratives analysed in the following sections of this chapter.

Chinese Descent MPs in New Zealand Since MMP System

Party	Name	Electorate/List	Term
National	Pansy Wong	Botany	1996-2011
National	Jian Yang	List MP	2011-2020
National	Nancy Lu	List MP	2023
National	Carols Cheung	Mt Roskill	2023
Labour	Raymond Huo	List MP	2008-2014, 2017-2020
Labour	Naisi Chen	List MP	2020-2023
ACT	Kenneth Wang	List MP	2004-2005
Green	Lawrence Xu	List MP	2024

Table 2 Chinese Descent MPs in New Zealand since MMP system 1996

This table provides an overview of Chinese descent Members of Parliament (MPs) in New Zealand since the adoption of the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) voting system. Here are some key observations and analysis:

Party Representation

National Party: The National Party has historically had the highest number of MPs of Chinese descent, namely Pansy Wong, Jian Yang, Nancy Lu, and Carols Cheung. Pansy Wong, who represented the Botany electorate (1996–2011), was notably the first MP of Chinese descent in New Zealand, thereby establishing an important milestone in the country’s parliamentary history. The others, including Jian Yang, Nancy Lu, and Carols Cheung, have served or are serving primarily as list MPs. Their presence on the party list suggests both the National Party’s recognition of the importance of Chinese representation and a strategic approach to broadening its voter appeal.

Labour Party: Labour has had two MPs of Chinese descent: Raymond Huo and Naisi Chen. Both served (or are serving) as list MPs, which means they were brought into Parliament based on Labour’s share of the party vote rather than by winning a specific electorate. Although Labour has had fewer Chinese-descent MPs than National, its representation in this area has been relatively steady.

ACT Party: The ACT Party had Kenneth Wang as a list MP from 2004. His tenure was short, highlighting the relatively limited engagement of the ACT Party with Chinese descent MPs over the years which means he was not returned to Parliament in the general election the following year (RNZ, 2014).

Green Party: The Green Party's inclusion of Lawrence Xu as a list MP starting in 2024 is notable as it marks the party's first Chinese descent MP, indicating an expansion in the party's diversity and possibly its appeal to Chinese New Zealanders.

Terms and Tenure:

Pansy Wong's 15-year tenure (1996–2011) stands out for both its length and her success as an electorate MP. Her role in Botany rather than on a party list points to her solid community connections and hints at the National Party's strategy to appeal to Chinese voters in that electorate.

Jian Yang was a National list MP for nearly a decade (2011–2020) and became a high-profile figure in the party. His departure was marked by controversies over alleged ties to the Chinese Communist Party, an issue widely reported in the media and emblematic of the scrutiny Chinese-descent MPs can face regarding loyalty or influence. Yang later endorsed Nancy Lu, highlighting ongoing networks among Chinese New Zealand politicians as well as the complex interplay between business interests, media ownership, and politics.

Raymond Huo, a Labour MP, had two separate stints in Parliament (2008–2014, 2017–2020), illustrating how the list system allows parties to retain experienced members. His presence across different terms points to Labour's approach of balancing fresh candidates with those who bring continuity and experience.

Nancy Lu, Carols Cheung (National), and Lawrence Xu (Green) are part of a more recent influx of Chinese-descent MPs, beginning in 2023 and beyond. Their arrival signals evolving strategies across parties to engage Chinese voters and reflect the community's growing significance in the electorate.

Most Chinese descent MPs have secured seats through party lists rather than winning electorates. List MPs are selected according to a party's overall vote and may have less direct accountability to a specific geographic constituency. They can also be more vulnerable to electoral fluctuations since their continuation in Parliament depends on their party's performance. Nevertheless, having more Chinese-descent politicians—through lists or otherwise—can be interpreted as evidence that parties see value in greater ethnic diversity.

Pansy Wong remains a notable exception as an electorate MP for Botany, which suggests that at least in her case, there was sufficient voter support to prevail in a constituency race. This points to the possibility of deeper community engagement when a candidate holds an electorate seat, although it remains an uncommon outcome among Chinese-descent MPs.

Chinese descent MPs now appear in the major parties (National and Labour) as well as in ACT and the Greens. This pattern indicates that most political groups have recognized the significance of Chinese New Zealanders. However, controversies such as Jian Yang's allegations of CCP links show that Chinese-descent MPs can face particular challenges related to public trust and perceptions of foreign influence. Ignoring these controversies in research or analysis might give an incomplete impression of how ethnic identity intersects with politics and media coverage.

While the list system ensures some level of ethnic diversity in Parliament, direct electorate victories like Pansy Wong's are rare. It remains to be seen whether future Chinese-descent politicians will pursue electorate seats in higher numbers or continue to enter Parliament predominantly via party lists. The broader question is whether this pattern will enable Chinese-descent MPs to achieve greater influence within their parties and with the public, especially given ongoing concerns around loyalty and funding that the media regularly highlights.

3.2 Chinese language media in New Zealand

The rise of Chinese-descent MPs in New Zealand's Parliament, as discussed in the previous section, can be better understood by examining the broader social and informational context in which Chinese communities access political news and engage with public life. One key element of this context is the ethnic Chinese-language media, which has historically influenced how Chinese immigrants learn about New Zealand politics, form opinions, and decide whether to vote. These media outlets often serve as a bridge between new migrants and local society, providing a mix of community news, translations of mainstream English-language reporting, and cultural content. Understanding the development and current state of Chinese-language media in New Zealand helps clarify how political information (including

information about Chinese-descent MPs and political parties) reaches Chinese-speaking voters.

According to China.com.cn (中国网) (2007), many Chinese-language newspapers in New Zealand appeared between 2000 and 2008, a period that coincided with a marked upswing in Chinese immigration. During these years, the relative affordability of newspaper production contributed to the launch of up to 30 Chinese-language newspapers in Auckland alone. While specific factors lowering production costs would need closer investigation (such as cheaper printing technologies and the use of smaller, privately run offices), the net effect was an intensely competitive environment. Some outlets survived by attracting enough advertising, whereas others ceased publication due to poor management or insufficient revenue (Wang & Guo, 2011).

By contrast, TV and radio stations required significantly larger financial investments. As a result, comparatively few Chinese TV or radio broadcasters emerged, and competition in those sectors remained much lower than among newspapers. Newspapers, in contrast, had more opportunities to secure local advertisements—from retail businesses, restaurants, or community services—which may have helped offset production expenses during that era.

Originally, Chinese newspapers in New Zealand charged a per-copy price. However, as immigration increased (especially in the early 2000s), free newspaper models started dominating the market. These free newspapers shared several characteristics:

Many Chinese newspapers were run by one or two employees, with the owner often serving as the main editor, journalist, and publisher. Such enterprises typically received no government or institutional funding.

Without public grants (such as NZ On Air support), most outlets relied on advertising revenue for survival. An advertisement might cost anywhere from NZD 20 to 60, depending on size and placement. This reliance meant editorial content sometimes skewed toward serving advertiser interests.

Few Chinese newspapers sustained a large reporting team; most relied on translated content from mainstream English-language media, including Stuff, NZ

Herald, and RNZ. Over time, newspapers reduced bilingual features because of the cost of translation and uncertain reader demand for fully bilingual texts.

Most newspapers were distributed in Chinese restaurants and supermarkets, functioning as community bulletins. Readers grew accustomed to picking them up for free, and paid Chinese newspapers all but disappeared from the market (Wang & Guo, 2011). It is unclear whether any have reintroduced paid models or significantly changed form since then. Further research is needed to update these observations to the present context (i.e., 2025), especially given the shift to online media.

A key question is how many of these once-numerous print outlets have transitioned online. Many Chinese community members now use websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms (notably WeChat) to access local news or political information. Although updated data is scarce, anecdotal evidence suggests that consolidation, online migration, and the shift to social media have substantially reshaped New Zealand's ethnic Chinese media sector.

TV: TV33, Channel 28 and 29, and World TV

Radio: AM936, FM99.4, FM90.6

Newspaper: New Zealand Newspaper, Chinese Herald, Mandarin Pages

Digital: HouGarden, GoKiwi, SkyKiwi, Morning – NZ, etc.

Newspaper: New Zealand Messenger

Digital: New Zealand Messenger



Radio: Waikato Chinese Voices

Newspaper: Waikato Weekly Chinese Newspaper and Asia Pacific Times

Digital: Waikatoweekly, Huayumeiti

Newspaper: Home Voice

Digital: Home Voice

Figure 9 (Ethnic Chinese language media landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand) presumably maps the main Chinese-language newspapers, radio, TV, or online platforms available at a certain date (information needed). The purpose of such a diagram is to illustrate the variety of media outlets and how they cover local, national, and international news. This representation helps identify where political content appears, how Chinese-speaking voters receive their information, and whether particular formats (print, broadcast, digital) dominate in different regions.

As the previous section highlighted, there is ongoing debate about why voter turnout among Chinese communities in New Zealand tends to be lower than other groups. One factor may be limited political outreach or tailored information in mainstream English media. Ethnic media can fill these gaps by providing in-language coverage of election issues, candidate profiles, and polling information. If such coverage focuses heavily on certain parties or lacks impartial reporting, it may shape political leanings. Some studies suggest these Chinese-language outlets often favour the National Party, but more rigorous evidence is needed to clarify whether this bias is consistent across different media platforms or time periods.

Moreover, research by Li (2013) indicates that ethnic Chinese media helps new immigrants adapt to life in New Zealand—offering not just news updates, but guidance on practical matters such as housing, education, healthcare, and navigating government services. In theory, this same capacity could extend to political participation—helping community members understand how voting works, identify which electorates they live in, or learn about local candidates. However, if coverage on elections or candidates remains sparse, or if editorial lines discourage engagement, the media’s potential to boost turnout might be undercut.

The dominance of advertising-based business models raises questions about editorial independence and the depth of political coverage. Meanwhile, the shift to online spaces—especially WeChat—has transformed how Chinese voters access information. WeChat Official Accounts can broadcast party press releases, campaign messages, or community endorsements, but also risk spreading unverified or partisan content. Many prior studies sampled only traditional print or broadcast outlets in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, leaving WeChat and other digital

platforms underexamined. This gap in the literature underscores why a closer look at online engagement is critical to understanding contemporary Chinese political participation and the role of media in shaping it.

Exploring the intersection of Chinese-language media and low voter turnout opens new avenues of inquiry. With demographic projections indicating that New Zealand's Asian population may continue to grow, these outlets could become increasingly influential in disseminating political information. The presence—or absence—of more Chinese-descent MPs, as well as how those MPs engage with Chinese media, may affect whether Chinese-speaking voters feel represented and motivated to participate in elections. It also raises the possibility that more visible Chinese candidates and culturally resonant campaign messages could help close the gap in voter turnout and political engagement.

Thus, the patterns discussed here—ranging from the emergence of numerous small newspapers in the early 2000s to the ongoing digital migration—are more than mere historical anecdotes. They shape how New Zealand's Chinese community navigates media landscapes, experiences politics, and, ultimately, decides whether and how to vote. These issues will be elaborated in the subsequent chapters, including the findings from participant interviews, which provide firsthand insights into why some Chinese-speaking voters remain disengaged and how Chinese-language media might address their concerns or reinforce existing barriers.

3.3 Who Consumes Chinese-Language Media in Aotearoa?

A noticeable indicator of the importance of Chinese-language media in Aotearoa New Zealand is the increasing visibility of MPs of Chinese descent, as discussed in the previous sub-sections. Many of these MPs connect with constituents through local Chinese outlets, suggesting that a substantial share of voters rely on in-language news. Understanding precisely who consumes these ethnic media platforms sheds light on how Chinese communities maintain cultural ties, access political information, and engage with local affairs.

Research by government agencies (e.g., Ministry for Ethnic Communities, 2023) and independent media organisations (e.g., NZ On Air, 2021) shows that a majority of Chinese community members—especially those who have recently migrated—prefer news in their native language. Factors such as limited English proficiency, a desire

for culturally relevant coverage, and perceptions that mainstream English-language outlets do not fully address Chinese-specific issues all contribute to this preference. Consequently, free Chinese newspapers, bilingual community radio stations, and digital platforms like WeChat (微信) often become primary sources of day-to-day information.

Yet language alone does not account for the entire readership. Chinese-language media also attract second-generation Chinese New Zealanders who have grown up bilingual. Although these younger individuals may navigate mainstream media with relative ease, they often maintain a connection to ethnic media for local community news, cultural events, or discussions on Sino-New Zealand relations (Li, 2013). Similarly, long-time migrants who arrived from different parts of the Chinese diaspora—such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Southeast Asia—may have varying expectations about political coverage and editorial stances. Despite regional differences, many continue to value local Chinese media for updates on both Chinese and New Zealand current affairs.

Additionally, social media and online forums have intensified this engagement. WeChat, for instance, has grown rapidly as a hub of community news, political commentary, and advertising in Chinese-speaking circles, mirroring global patterns of diaspora media use (Yang, 2018). This online shift helps explain why some political parties now regularly post campaign materials or host discussions on WeChat, aiming to reach Chinese-speaking voters who might otherwise feel disconnected from mainstream political conversations.

Overall, the audiences for Chinese-language media in New Zealand are far from monolithic. They encompass recent arrivals, multi-generational households, and a wide range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Yet for most, Chinese-language outlets offer more than just daily news: they provide social connections, practical guidance on navigating life in New Zealand, and a sense of collective identity. As the thesis demonstrates, these factors intersect with wider political dynamics and point to the significant role ethnic media can play in shaping how

Chinese New Zealanders experience, interpret, and participate in the nation's political landscape.

In New Zealand, several Chinese-language media outlets provide election coverage, including Sky Kiwi, TV33, and BNE. During the 2020 general election, these platforms offered live-streamed content and election night updates, each with unique production methods, advantages, and challenges. However, there is no public source regarding were the reporter paid or were they professional journalist.



Figure 9 Chinese language media – Sky Kiwi at 2020 general election



Figure 10 Chinese language media – tv33 at 2020 general election



Figure 11 Chinese language media – BNE at 2020 general election

- **Sky Kiwi:** Utilizing a mobile phone for live streaming, Sky Kiwi’s election night coverage was candidly delivered, with reporters holding phones to capture footage. Though effective in reaching audiences, this approach resulted in video quality issues, with shaky visuals and limited framing.
- **TV33:** Known for its indoor livestreams, TV33’s coverage lacked on-the-ground correspondents, presenting an image-focused but less interactive format.
- **BNE:** Using earphones as a microphone, BNE’s live streams were similarly constrained by limited equipment. However, these channels still provided a valuable Mandarin summary for non-English speakers, facilitating access to election information through targeted summaries and Mandarin-language interviews with candidates.

Pros and Cons of Chinese-Language Election Coverage

The strengths of Chinese-language media coverage included accessibility, with content delivered in Mandarin and culturally relevant expressions that resonated with Chinese audiences. Candidates from political parties targeting the Chinese community engaged more readily with Chinese-language outlets, thus providing voters with insights from candidates who addressed their concerns more directly than mainstream media often does.

However, the drawbacks included limited production quality, as many outlets operated with restricted budgets and staff shortages, resulting in handheld, shaky

footage, and occasional connectivity issues. These limitations impact both the audience experience, and the credibility of the information presented. Research participants have not complained about the ethnic Chinese language media election night coverage.

During the 2020 New Zealand general election, several Chinese-language outlets provided live coverage in Mandarin for the local Chinese community. Notably, SkyKiwi, TV33, and BNE each offered election-night updates via online livestreams. Their approaches were creative but low-cost. For example:

SkyKiwi – This Auckland-based Chinese news portal live-streamed election night on social media using a mobile phone. A reporter literally held up a phone to capture the scene, resulting in *“shaky visuals and limited framing”* during the broadcastfile. The coverage was candid and on-the-ground, but the improvised setup meant the video quality suffered.

TV33 – A local Chinese-language TV channel (channel 33) took a different approach by hosting an indoor livestream. Lacking any on-site field reporters at party venues, TV33’s broadcast relied on in-studio anchors discussing results. This *“image-focused but less interactive format”* meant viewers saw graphics and commentary, but no live cross-overs to election events in the field.

BNE – This smaller Chinese-language media outlet also streamed election updates online. Its correspondent resorted to using simple gear – even *earbud earphones as a makeshift microphone* – to report live. Like SkyKiwi, BNE’s coverage was constrained by very limited equipment and no professional camera crew.

Despite these limitations, all three outlets fulfilled an important role: they delivered real-time election news in Mandarin. This gave many non-English-speaking Chinese New Zealanders accessible information on election night, including translated summaries of results and even candidate interviews in Mandarin. In short, these ethnic media provided a valuable service to their community.

Chinese-language media in New Zealand is indispensable for non-English-speaking Chinese New Zealanders, especially in political engagement. However, the disparity in production quality and funding between Chinese-language media and mainstream English-language media highlights a gap in equitable media representation and

access. Moving forward, increasing support for the ethnic media could improve the quality and scope of their reporting, ensuring that all communities in New Zealand have equitable access to reliable and professionally presented election information.

The contrast between grassroots election coverage by Chinese-language media outlets and the institutional approach of RNZ's Chinese-language platform reflects a significant shift in how political information is being made accessible to Chinese New Zealanders.

Figure 14 shows the homepage of RNZ's Chinese-language service, launched as part of a two-year collaboration with NZ On Air. This initiative responded to findings from an NZ On Air-commissioned study, which highlighted that New Zealand's Indian and Chinese communities each have distinct needs when it comes to language and access to news. The RNZ Chinese page (alongside a parallel section for Indian audiences) represents the broadcaster's first formal step into daily multilingual news translation, a move designed to promote more inclusive and equitable access to public service journalism (RNZ, 2024 & NZ On Air, 2023).

RNZ中文欢迎您!
敬请点击上方蓝字，关注RNZ中文，关注优质资讯。

2024年1月，一切都是崭新的，RNZ的微信公众号——“RNZ中文”——开通了!
这是新西兰国家广播电台 (RNZ, Radio New Zealand) 第一次入驻中文社交媒体平台，而就在六年前，RNZ中文团队也才刚刚于2023年6月成立。



半年时间虽短，但我们却已经经历了许多“第一次”:

- 2023年6月，RNZ开始组建中文团队。
- 6月，RNZ开始使用中文对英文新闻进行翻译，并建立总体工作制度和至少双重确证的编辑流程，以确保监督到位和内容准确。
- 6月，RNZ开始对突发新闻进行中文报道，派出华语记者前往现场采集第一手资料。



火花四溅，青年候选人辩论引发掌声与笑声



- 9月，RNZ第一次推出了中文普通话视频，同时也第一次发布了中文粤语视频，并第一次使用了正体字（繁体字）和香港字（粤语字），与华语社区及全体新西兰人共同庆祝“新西兰中文周”。
- 9月-10月，RNZ第一次以中文推出新西兰大选专题，包括【大选每日简讯】、“可视化数据”的动态图表系列、政经制度【小档案】等。
- 10月14日，RNZ第一次使用中文对大选进行实时在线报道 (Liveblog)，为华语读者完成大选之夜的滚动直播。
- 2024年1月，RNZ开通中文微信公众号。



上图: RNZ于2023年中文周发布视频。
图源: RNZ社交媒体TikTok视频截图

Instagram



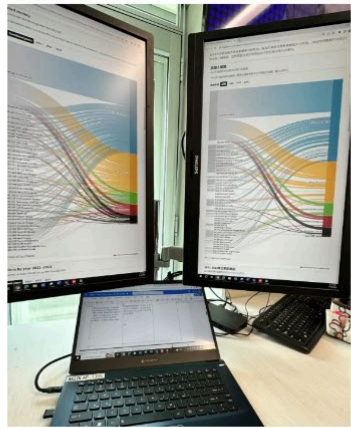
上图: 2023年10月14日，RNZ首次使用中文Liveblog对大选之夜进行实时在线直播。
图源: RNZ中文网页截图

新西兰广播电台的中文版块，“RNZ中文”网页(rnz.co.nz/news/chinese)专注于新西兰多元文化影响与报道，而“RNZ中文”微信公众号 (RADIO-NEW-ZEALAND) 的设置，则期待在原有中基础上，能够进一步加强与华人朋友们的联系。

之际，也是展望未来之时。

RNZ通过中文网页持续推送新西兰人所关心的大大小小的新闻。2024年，RNZ将通过与中文读者分享更多人感兴趣的资讯。

RNZ祝华人朋友们身体健康，幸福快乐！愿你们幸福，也继续将宝贵的建议与新闻线索发送给我们。我们的电子邮箱是: chinese@rnz.co.nz



上图: 大选“可视化数据”的动态图表。
图源: Ruth Kao拍摄



2023年7月19日拍摄。为庆祝RNZ中文网页正式上线成功，一个特意带到办公室的寓意吉祥的橙子。
图源: Ruth Kao拍摄

Figure 12 RNZ launched WeChat (微信) Official Account at 2024



【新闻简报】市中心夜间停车收费延期实施

夜间停车收费将从原计划的7月1日推迟到10月1日，周日及公共假期收费计划不变；
16/5/2024



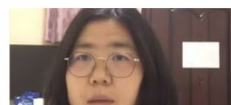
Luxon就2024年财政预算案发表演讲，重申减税承诺

联合政府首个预算案确定不会实施紧缩性财政，但也不会通过借贷来实施减税。
15/5/2024



调查显示到办公室上班的工作效率更高

业内人士认为居家办公不会退出历史舞台，但雇主和员工应该达成共识。
15/5/2024



中国公民记者张展四年刑满但去向未明，因记录疫情社会状况入狱

张展是新冠疫情期间出现的公民记者之一。由于当局对媒体进行严格管控，疫情爆发后许多情况无法向外界公开。2021年，张展获得由美国人权组织对华援助协会设立的林昭自由奖。

Figure 13 RNZ 中文 Homepage.

What Chinese New Zealanders matter when they living in Aotearoa? Figure 16 is reproduced from the quantitative study, which conducted a survey in 2021 among a sample of 200 Chinese New Zealanders. The methodology involved online questionnaires yielding insights into what political issues were most important to participants. While not a fully nationwide poll, the data provide a useful snapshot of the priorities of a certain segment of Chinese-speaking voters. By citing the original publisher—along with any relevant margin of error or sample size details—you allow readers to assess its reliability.

Chinese New Zealanders were more likely to identify immigration policy (18.8%), tax (14.2%), and medical services (11.6%) as top concerns, while placing little to no priority on welfare, child poverty, climate change, or crime—issues that scored significantly higher among the general population.

Many Chinese migrants come from political systems and economic contexts where issues such as economic stability, immigration security, taxation, and healthcare access are more personally pressing than abstract policy debates around climate or social welfare. For recent migrants, immigration policy directly affects their legal status, family reunification, and long-term planning—making it a central political issue. Similarly, having grown up in systems without public welfare, many migrants may place less priority on policies such as child poverty or climate action, either due

to unfamiliarity or because these issues appear secondary to immediate material concerns.

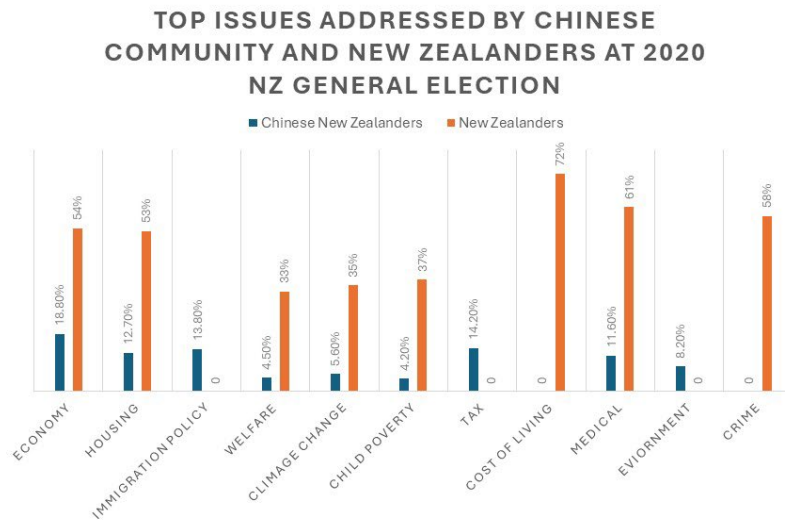


Figure 14 Matters for Chinese community at the election time

2020 New Zealand general election party policies from Chinese language media (新中传媒 NZC Media Group Ltd)

	Labour	National	Green	Act	NZ First	Maori
Economy	Updating			Updating	Updating	Updating
Tax	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating
Immigration	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating		Updating
infrastructure	Updating		Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating
Crime	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating		Updating
Social	Updating			Updating		Updating
Education	Updating		Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating
Health	Updating			Updating	Updating	Updating
Refugee	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating	Updating

Table 3 2020 New Zealand general election party policies from Chinese language media (新中传媒 NZC Media Group Ltd)

More detail about the table that National Party and Green Party regarding the Economy policy:

National: Small business support. Expand employment at Tiwai in the South Island. New type of enterprise support policy. Create employment. Accelerated business investment plan. Expand tourism industry plan.

Green: Launching a new energy training program to create employment.

Immigration policy by NZ First: Immigration numbers are kept below 15,000 per year.

More infrastructure policies from National Party:

- Upgrading Hawke's Bay Hospital facilities
- Investing in education infrastructure
- \$31 billion in transportation investments (including a second harbor bridge, highways)
- East-west transportation hub construction
- Puhinui and Onehunga airport rail construction
- Auckland train line construction (Lines 3 & 4)
- East bus rapid transit construction
- Northwest bus rapid transit corridor construction
- Onehunga to CBD interchange construction
- Waikato expressway
- Bay of Plenty & Coromandel transportation expansion
- Palmerston North ring road construction
- Wairarapa transportation construction
- Horowhenua & Kapiti Coast transportation construction
- Wellington and Hutt Valley transportation construction
- Belfast to Pegasus

- Christchurch to Ashburton expressway

Irrespective of crime issues, the New Zealand First policy was Police Matter:
Continue to increase frontline police officers.

Three political parties have addressed social policies respectively:

National:

- Cancel invest in the first 1000 days
- Protect our borders
- Address the harms of methamphetamine
- Establish a national cancer centre
- \$200 million special fund for cancer drugs
- \$20 million special fund for gynaecological cancer
- Law and order

Green:

- Provide \$325 per week for students and the unemployed
- \$100 per week welfare for children under three
- \$190 per week for the first child, \$120 per week for additional children (replacing family tax credits)
- Provide \$110 per week allowance for single parents
- Reform ACC
- Receive more income from work before welfare is reduced
- Impose a 1% wealth tax on assets exceeding \$1 million
- Revise tax brackets

NZ First: Children under the age of 16 will all receive allowances.

National Party's education policy includes:

- Abolishing teacher registration fees

- Restarting international education
- Reforming vocational education.

Health Policy:

National: The cost of isolation is self-funded, approximately \$3000.

Green:

- Upgrade community solar panels
- Ban new industrial pollution
- Establish a new energy fund
- Stop using coal after 2030

The above details and figure 16 are best understood through the lens of migration experience and cultural background. For many Chinese migrants, particularly first-generation individuals, political concerns are shaped by practical needs related to their immigration status, financial stability, and access to services like healthcare. In Mainland China, public welfare systems are limited, and self-reliance is culturally emphasised. As such, issues like welfare reform or child poverty may not feature prominently in political consciousness, either due to unfamiliarity or the assumption that these are not areas where state intervention is expected or trusted.

Moreover, concerns about immigration policy stem from direct personal stakes: visa status, family reunification, and access to permanent residency are ongoing stressors for many. Similarly, taxation is viewed not only as a financial burden but as a metric of fairness and belonging—especially for business owners, who are overrepresented among Chinese migrants in New Zealand.

It is important to recognise that this snapshot reflects attitudes in 2020, and that political awareness is not fixed. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising crime rates in urban areas, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis may have shifted priorities within the Chinese community since this data was collected. Follow-up surveys in 2023 or later could provide updated insights into whether these changes have led to greater alignment with mainstream political concerns—or whether cultural and linguistic gaps continue to shape divergent political outlooks.

This chart is not just a comparison of issue salience—it is a reflection of the structural, cultural, and informational barriers that shape political participation among Chinese New Zealanders. Rather than judging these differences as a lack of empathy or civic responsibility, they should be understood as evidence of unequal political incorporation. Bridging these gaps will require more inclusive political communication, better bilingual outreach, and sustained investment in trusted, professional Chinese-language media that can explain complex issues like welfare, social inequality, and climate policy in ways that resonate culturally and linguistically.

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This need for clearer political education and engagement becomes even more important when considering the complexity of New Zealand's electoral system. The Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) voting system, while more representative than first-past-the-post systems, can be confusing to new voters—particularly those from countries without proportional representation or multi-party coalitions. This includes many Chinese migrants who may be unfamiliar with the dual-vote system and the idea that smaller parties can enter Parliament either through the party vote threshold (5%) or by winning a single electorate seat.

3.4 Unusual Covid pandemic at the election time

March 25, 2020 marked an extraordinary turning point for New Zealand, as the nation implemented a lockdown, halting daily activities across Aotearoa (Martin, 2023). With the pandemic's onset, all research, study, and meeting activities swiftly transitioned to virtual platforms. The second lockdown necessitated further methodological adaptations, leading to online administration of quantitative data collection and the majority of interviews, accompanied by a pilot study leveraging

mixed methods. The pandemic also profoundly impacted the media landscape and disrupted the general election, which was subsequently postponed by one month.

Although this dissertation has focused on the digitalisation of media over the past decade, the pandemic's arrival in March 2020 accelerated these trends, reshaping New Zealand's and global media practices.

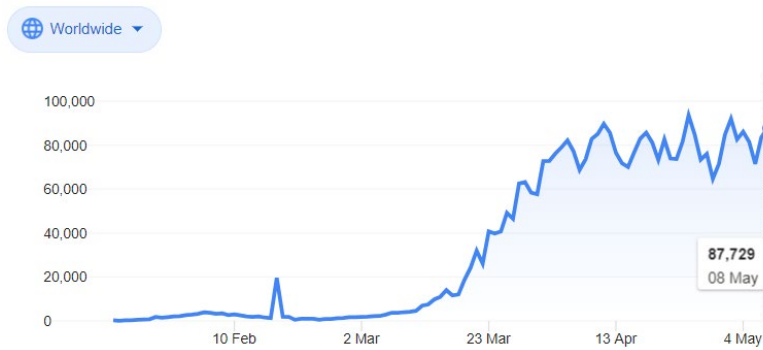


Figure 15. COVID-19 pandemic data in the world by 8 May 2020

Since the initial cases of COVID-19 emerged in China in late 2019, the virus's spread led the World Health Organization to declare it a pandemic, with daily global infections peaking at 87,729 by May 8.

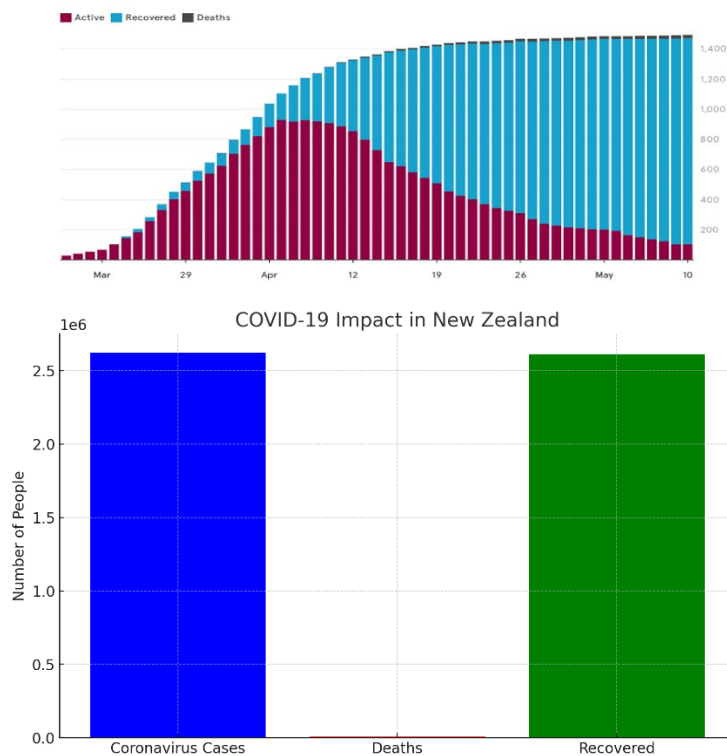


Figure 16. New Zealand the COVID-19 total 10 May 2020. Source from: Support The Spinoff

In New Zealand, the online news platform *The Spinoff* reported that as of May 10, 2020, there were 1,494 confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases—significantly fewer than early predictions had suggested. The country’s strict six-week lockdown proved effective, limiting new cases to one per day for over two weeks. The pandemic response garnered substantial public support, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Director-General of Health Dr. Ashley Bloomfield receiving high approval ratings for their roles, with 84% of New Zealanders endorsing the government’s handling of the crisis (Colmar Brunton’s *COVID Times*, 2020).

During the lockdown, national media became pivotal in fostering social cohesion. Daily government press briefings were held during Levels 4 and 3 lockdowns, featuring either the Director-General of Health or the Prime Minister, and occasionally the Finance Minister. This direct communication channel between the government and citizens mirrored centralised media communication styles observed in countries like China, underscoring the unifying social role media can play in times of crisis. However, financial strain hit New Zealand’s media sector as advertising revenue plummeted, forcing media companies to cut staff and reduce salaries. Notably, Bauer Media Group ceased operations in New Zealand during the pandemic.

On March 19, 2020, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the closure of New Zealand’s borders to non-citizens and non-residents (RNZ, 2020). As detailed in previous chapters, New Zealand’s electoral system allows permanent residents who have lived in the country for at least a year to vote (Whyte, 2023). With immigration dramatically reduced, questions arise regarding the political perspectives of the Chinese community toward the general election.

Barker and McMillan (2024) propose that COVID-19 and the media have influenced immigrant voting behaviour, particularly among Chinese New Zealanders. The study suggests that Chinese New Zealanders’ political attitudes are shaped by political affiliation, economic perspectives, and cultural identity. In the next chapter, further mixed-methods analysis will explore how educational attainment affects political attitudes and voting behaviour. Covid influenced some Chinese New Zealanders voting decision as well. A more detailed discussion of this is given in the Chapter Five.

With the rise of digital platforms like WeChat and Weibo, media in China has evolved to reach a broader audience faster and more efficiently. Digital media allows for real-time updates, especially important during emergencies, and helps the government quickly disseminate information nationwide. This shift to digital has expanded the influence of media in Chinese society and allowed the government to engage with the public in new, interactive ways.

3.5 New Zealand Political Parties targeting Chinese New Zealanders at the election

Since the 2017 election, WeChat (微信) has emerged as a key social media platform for political parties to target specific voter groups. During that election, Māori Party candidate Wetex Kang was accused of bribing Chinese New Zealanders by using WeChat's "digital red envelope" feature, through which he received \$30 NZD in total (Garrick, 2017; RNZ, 2017). Although New Zealand has long enjoyed a global reputation for low levels of corruption and high institutional trust, recent developments suggest that this perception is beginning to shift. According to Transparency International New Zealand (2024), the country's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score dropped to 85 in 2023, its lowest rating since 2012 and the second consecutive year of decline. While New Zealand remains in the top three globally, behind Denmark and Finland, this downward trend has raised concerns both domestically and internationally about the integrity of its political and institutional frameworks.

Historically, New Zealand's democratic legitimacy has been reinforced by its reputation for transparent governance, independent judiciary, and minimal political interference in public administration. However, increasing public scrutiny over political donations, lobbying practices, and government procurement transparency has called this reputation into question. The 2023 coalition government, especially the role played by New Zealand First, has been widely criticised in media and public discourse for alleged conflicts of interest and opaque dealings with private sector actors (Transparency International NZ, 2024; Johnston, 2005).

For immigrant communities—particularly those from regions with higher levels of corruption—New Zealand's clean governance reputation has often been a key

motivator for civic trust and political participation. However, as concerns grow over political accountability and ethical governance, migrant voters may become more disillusioned or disengaged from electoral politics. This is especially relevant for Chinese New Zealanders, many of whom express ambivalence toward political engagement due to perceived complexity, cultural distance, or limited trust in the system (Li, 2013; Baker & McMillan, 2017). If these communities begin to question the integrity of New Zealand's political process, even targeted outreach through ethnic media or bilingual campaign efforts may not be sufficient to increase participation.

As Norris (2011) argues, political trust plays a critical role in shaping whether citizens feel their participation is meaningful. When trust erodes—whether due to lived experience or mediated perceptions—engagement often declines. In this context, understanding how Chinese New Zealanders interpret recent political developments is essential for assessing future participation trends and the effectiveness of political messaging in ethnic media.

As Norris (2011) argues, political trust plays a critical role in shaping whether citizens feel their participation is meaningful. When that trust erodes—whether through direct experiences or mediated perceptions—civic engagement tends to decline. This insight is particularly relevant when examining how Chinese New Zealanders interact with political messaging and how they interpret recent developments in New Zealand's political landscape, including concerns about transparency and inclusion.

Figure 21 shows WeChat accounts for political figures such as former Labour List MP Naisi Chen, as well as accounts for both the National and Labour parties, were used to engage with the Chinese community. However, Zhao (2023) criticised both parties for lacking a comprehensive strategy that addresses the specific concerns of the Chinese community, such as immigration policies, tax cuts, education, and welfare.

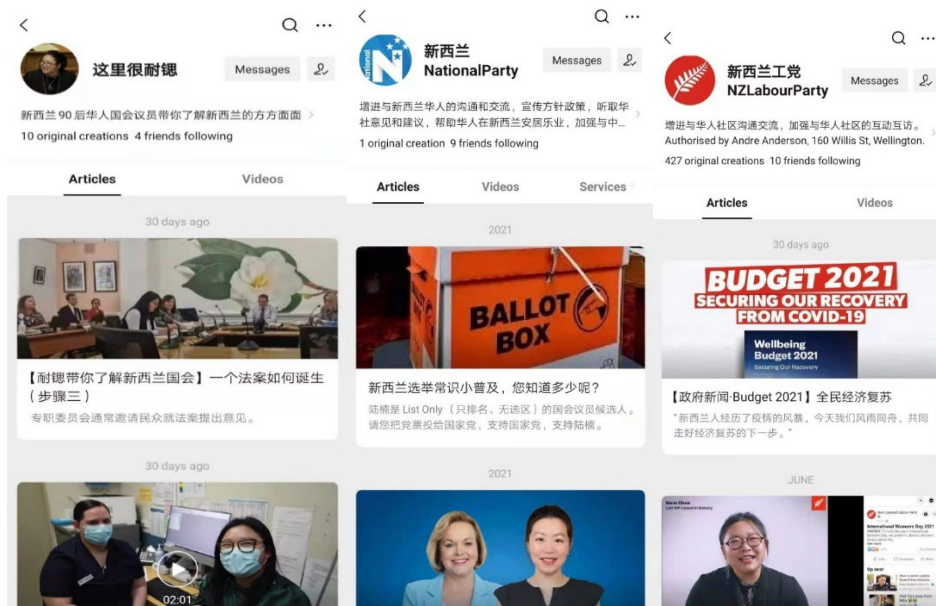


Figure 17 From left to right: former Labour List MP-Naisi Chen WeChat (微信) Account, National Party WeChat (微信) Account and Labour WeChat (微信) Account

As Norris (2011) argues, political trust plays a critical role in shaping whether citizens perceive their participation as meaningful. When trust erodes—whether through lived experience or media framing—civic engagement often declines. This is particularly relevant for Chinese New Zealanders, whose engagement with the political system is shaped not only by language and cultural factors but also by their perceptions of how responsive and inclusive political actors are.

To explore how political parties have attempted to engage with the Chinese-speaking electorate, Author conducted an original content analysis of Chinese-language WeChat Official Accounts operated by New Zealand political figures and parties during the 2020 election period. As shown in Figure 21, these included accounts associated with former Labour List MP Naisi Chen, as well as official communication channels for both the Labour and National parties. These accounts were used to disseminate campaign messages in simplified Chinese, highlight candidate activities, and promote party platforms.

However, while this presence on WeChat signals an attempt at digital engagement, Zhao (2023) argues that both parties have lacked a coherent communication strategy tailored to the specific priorities of the Chinese community—particularly in areas such as immigration policy, tax reform, education, and access to social support. My analysis of these accounts supports this critique: content often consisted

of generalised policy summaries or candidate promotions, with little evidence of in-depth discussion on issues consistently identified as important by Chinese voters (see Figure 16). This gap between outreach and relevance may contribute to a perception of superficial inclusion, ultimately undermining trust and limiting political participation.

Labour Party and National Party WeChat (微信) articles since election champaign started		
	Labour Party	National Party
Articles about MPs	6	22
Articles about Parties	166	17
Total	172	39

Table 4 Labour Party and National Party WeChat (微信) articles since election champaign started

Labour’s heavy focus on general party policies, with limited emphasis on individual MPs, contrasts with National’s greater focus on MP Jian Yang.

From this analysis, several key insights can be drawn regarding the use of WeChat as a political tool by New Zealand’s Labour and National parties, particularly in their efforts to engage with Chinese New Zealand voters during elections:

- a). Both parties recognized the importance of WeChat, a platform widely used by the Chinese community, as a way to directly reach voters. This reflects the growing significance of digital and social media in modern political campaigns, especially when targeting specific ethnic or cultural communities.
- b). The Labour Party focused mainly on promoting general party policies, as evidenced by the 166 WeChat articles related to the party, compared to only six articles about individual MPs. In contrast, the National Party took a more personalised approach, dedicating a significant portion of their content to former MP Dr. Jian Yang. This shows a more targeted appeal through a prominent community figure.
- c). Zhao (2023) points out that both the Labour and National parties lacked a comprehensive strategy addressing the specific concerns of the Chinese community, such as immigration, tax reforms, and welfare. While WeChat was used to connect with the community, the content may not have fully resonated with voters’ priorities.

Both parties missed an opportunity to deeply engage Chinese New Zealanders on issues directly affecting them.

d). The National Party's focus on Dr. Jian Yang demonstrates the potential effectiveness of using high-profile figures from within the community to foster a more personal connection with voters. In contrast, Labour's limited attention to its MPs may have weakened their engagement strategy, missing the opportunity to build stronger relationships with the Chinese community through representatives like Naisi Chen.

e). The controversy surrounding the use of WeChat's "digital red envelope" feature by Māori Party candidate Wetex Kang, which led to accusations of bribery, raises concerns about transparency and ethics in political campaigning. This case illustrates the risks of misusing social media features, potentially undermining the integrity of the electoral process.

This analysis highlights that while WeChat is a powerful tool for engaging specific voter communities, both Labour and National need to refine their strategies to better address the concerns and priorities of these communities. Furthermore, targeted engagement through well-known representatives and careful management of ethical concerns are essential for maximizing the potential of social media in political campaigns.

This section examining the use of social media like WeChat in political campaigns, and Chapter Four, which focuses on the theoretical framework for studying diaspora, media use, and political engagement, is centered on understanding how media influences the political behaviour of diasporic communities, specifically Chinese New Zealanders.

This chapter has explored the intersection of Chinese-language media, political messaging, and the voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders in the context of recent general elections. Through analysis of media content, voter issue priorities, and digital communication platforms such as WeChat, it becomes clear that while political parties have made visible efforts to engage with Chinese-speaking voters, these efforts often fall short in terms of depth, relevance, and responsiveness to community concerns. The frequent emphasis on surface-level representation—such

as bilingual messaging and candidate promotion—fails to address deeper issues of political trust, policy resonance, and long-standing underrepresentation.

The findings suggest that Chinese New Zealanders' political participation is shaped by a combination of informational accessibility, media framing, and perceptions of whether their specific concerns—such as immigration, tax, and education—are genuinely being addressed. While there is increasing outreach via ethnic media, this alone is not enough to bridge the gap between political institutions and the diverse realities of Chinese communities.

To better understand the dynamics at play, the next chapter presents the theoretical and methodological foundations of this research. It outlines the key frameworks—Agenda-Setting Theory and Issue Voting Theory—that inform the analysis. In addition, it details the mixed-methods approach used in the study, including quantitative analysis and participant interviews, explaining how these methods were selected to answer the research questions and capture the complexity of media–politics–community interactions.

Chapter Four Research Design, Methods and Quantitative Study

This chapter details research methods and justifies the theoretical framework and quantitative method used to explore how media shapes political engagement among Chinese New Zealanders. This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research methods considered, the reasoning behind the final choice of methods, and an evaluation of their strengths and limitations. The mixed-methods approach, which combines both qualitative and quantitative data, was selected to capture the complexity of media influence and political behaviours within ethnic communities.

This study is guided by a pragmatic research philosophy, which encourages the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to fully understand the research questions. Pragmatism aligns with the focus on real-world issues like political engagement, media consumption, and social behaviours (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). These phenomena require multiple perspectives and data sources to create a comprehensive understanding.

The mixed-methods approach was chosen for its ability to address the research questions from multiple angles. Quantitative surveys offer insights into the general trends of media consumption and political engagement, while qualitative interviews provide a nuanced understanding of how these trends are experienced by individuals (Lim, 2024). This combination allows for both broad and detailed analysis, which is crucial for studying complex issues like media influence and political participation.

Research Design

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who were both politically engaged and non-engaged within the Chinese community. The sample included a diverse mix of age groups, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds to capture a wide range of political behaviours. Survey respondents were recruited from online Chinese community platforms, such as WeChat groups, while interview participants were selected based on their involvement in previous political campaigns.

The survey included questions on media usage, political participation, trust in media, and voting behaviours. It was distributed online, primarily through Chinese social media platforms to maximize reach within the community. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key community members, including media professionals, political activists, and ordinary voters, to understand their media consumption habits and how these influence their political decisions.

Statistical techniques such as regression analysis were used to examine the relationship between media consumption and voting behaviour. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the most commonly used media platforms among Chinese New Zealanders for political information. Thematic analysis was applied to the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes related to media bias, political engagement, and the influence of social media. NVivo software was used for coding and organizing the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of Waikato's ethics committee. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, their right to withdraw at any time, and the confidentiality of their responses. Special attention was given to cultural sensitivity, particularly when discussing politically sensitive issues, ensuring that participants felt comfortable and respected throughout the research process.

This chapter has outlined the rationale for choosing a mixed-methods approach, discussed the research design, and justified the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The integration of these methods provides a robust framework for analysing the complex relationship between media consumption and political engagement within the Chinese community in New Zealand.

The survey employed in this study featured 60 closed-ended questions and 2 open-ended questions, structured into four key sections: Basic Information, Chinese Language Media in New Zealand, English Language Media, and Political Engagement in the 2020 New Zealand General Election. The survey was designed to be bilingual, offering both English and Mandarin, to ensure comprehensive data collection from Chinese New Zealanders of various backgrounds. The respondents

included new arrivals, first-generation migrants, 1.5-generation individuals, and skilled immigrants. Their self-identifications varied widely, with terms such as global citizen, Kiwi, New Zealander, Asian, Chinese New Zealander, Chinese, and Chiwi (a blend of Chinese and Kiwi) being used to express their sense of identity.

The survey's findings offer a detailed examination of the nuanced relationship between political engagement and media consumption among Chinese New Zealanders. This interaction is shaped by factors such as cultural identity, socioeconomic status, and integration into New Zealand society. As an influential and growing demographic, Chinese New Zealanders are becoming more active in political discourse, while balancing the preservation of their ethnic identity and navigating a bilingual media landscape that spans both Chinese- and English-language platforms.

Through a quantitative approach, this study investigates how Chinese New Zealanders engage with various media platforms, particularly the widespread use of WeChat (微信) in conjunction with mainstream English-language outlets. It also explores the role of media in shaping political perspectives, addressing perceived biases within both ethnic and mainstream media, and assessing their influence on voting behaviour during the 2020 general election. This analysis provides critical insights into how Chinese New Zealanders manage their dual identity, maintain cultural ties, and participate in New Zealand's democratic processes.

The research contributes to broader discussions on the political engagement of ethnic minorities, the influence of media on voter behaviour, and the challenges immigrant communities face in accessing accurate and relevant political information. The findings highlight the importance of understanding the unique media consumption patterns of Chinese New Zealanders and their impact on political participation in a multicultural society.

The theoretical framework section outlines the key concepts and theories that guide this research on the Chinese diaspora, media use, and political engagement in New Zealand. By integrating insights from socio-economic theory, political representation, content analysis, and Agenda-Setting Theory, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape political behaviour among Chinese New Zealanders. To frame the analysis of Chinese diaspora, media use,

and political engagement, this research adopts the media effect and agenda-setting theory as its primary theoretical framework. Agenda-setting theory, initially developed by McCombs and Shaw (1968), posits that mass media has a significant influence on public opinion by highlighting certain issues over others, thereby shaping the public's perception of what is important. This theory is particularly relevant in understanding how Chinese-language media may influence the political opinions and voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders.

Agenda-setting is complemented by the concept of agenda-melding, which explores how individuals integrate media content with their personal beliefs and the values of their communities. McMillan and Barker (2021) found that in the 2017 New Zealand general election, Chinese-language media primarily focused on the major parties, such as National and Labour, while providing limited coverage of smaller parties. This media bias may have contributed to a lack of awareness among Chinese voters about these smaller parties, influencing their voting behaviour in favour of the major parties.

Agenda-melding, a concept introduced by McCombs et al. (2014), addresses how individuals merge the agendas set by the media with their personal and community values to form a coherent worldview. This process is crucial for understanding how Chinese New Zealanders, as a diasporic community, consume and process information from various media sources. As media convergence continues to evolve, with traditional media being supplemented by digital platforms and social media, the role of agenda-melding becomes increasingly significant in shaping political engagement.

The need for group belonging, as discussed in the context of agenda-melding, drives individuals to seek out media that aligns with their social circles and communities. This process reduces cognitive dissonance and helps individuals integrate into their chosen groups. For Chinese New Zealanders, this may involve engaging with both Chinese-language media and mainstream New Zealand media, creating a blended media diet that influences their political perceptions and behaviours.

This research applies agenda-setting theory to investigate the influence of Chinese-language media on the voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and fluctuating support for the National Party.

The first hypothesis explores whether Chinese-language media exhibited a bias toward the National Party during this period, and how this might have affected the party's engagement with the Chinese community on platforms like WeChat (微信).

The second hypothesis examines whether Chinese New Zealanders' voting behaviour is significantly influenced by Chinese-language media, testing the applicability of agenda-setting theory in this context.

In addition to agenda-setting, this research incorporates issue voting theory and rational ignorance theory to further understand the voting decisions of Chinese New Zealanders (Park, 2006). Issue voting theory suggests that voters make decisions based on their assessment of specific issues, such as the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rational ignorance theory, on the other hand, posits that voters may choose to remain uninformed on certain issues due to the perceived cost of acquiring information, relying instead on media cues. The directional theory of issue voting, which considers the proximity of voters' preferences to those of the parties or candidates, is also relevant in analysing how the National Party's outreach to the Chinese community may have influenced their positive evaluations among Chinese New Zealanders (Gilljam, 1997).

Together, these frameworks help explain why Chinese-language news coverage of the National Party's outreach, for instance, may have shaped positive evaluations among Chinese New Zealanders even when individual voters did not deeply engage with every policy debate.

4.1 The Socioeconomic Status and Political Autonomy of Chinese New Zealanders:

The majority of participants (80%) identified as either Chinese New Zealanders or Chinese, underscoring the persistence of ethnic identity among Chinese in New Zealand. Despite most participants being immigrants or the children of immigrants, this result highlights a sustained connection to Chinese heritage. The relatively low proportion of respondents (3.8%) and their parents (9.5%) born in New Zealand reflects the relatively recent history of Chinese migration to the country.

A significant portion of respondents (63.7%) are young or middle-aged, suggesting that the survey reflects the views of economically active individuals. This

demographic composition likely mirrors a group that is engaged in political, social, and economic activities. These insights are crucial in understanding the potential influence this age group might exert within the broader Chinese community in New Zealand, particularly in shaping its future trajectory.

Nearly 38.3% of respondents reported a household income exceeding NZD\$100,000 per annum, indicative of relative financial stability or affluence within this group. This economic standing may inform their perspectives on social and political issues. Given the high cost of living in urban New Zealand, this data points to a well-established, economically secure subset of the Chinese community.

Full-time workers accounted for 38.2% of the respondents, and 24.9% identified as professionals. This significant presence of professionals within the community indicates that many respondents occupy roles that contribute to New Zealand's intellectual and economic sectors. Their professional status suggests access to wider social and economic networks, which may facilitate greater involvement in political discourse and societal influence.

The survey underscores the high educational attainment among respondents, with 93% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Such a level of education is likely correlated with the professional occupations and higher income levels reported. Educated individuals are typically more engaged in civic matters, more informed about political issues, and more likely to participate in activities such as voting and community advocacy.

Approximately 44% of respondents have resided in New Zealand for more than ten years, indicating a significant degree of social integration. However, only 8.1% were born in the country, pointing to the continued presence of immigrant identities. This balance between integration and retention of immigrant perspectives may shape their experiences and interactions, blending New Zealand and Chinese cultural values.

Over half of the participants stated that their family members do not influence their voting decisions, suggesting a notable degree of political autonomy. This individualistic approach to political participation may signal an evolving sense of civic identity within the Chinese New Zealand community, where personal agency is emphasized over familial consensus, which could be expected in collectivist cultures.

The first part of the survey results portray a Chinese New Zealand community that is well-educated, financially stable, and primarily composed of immigrants who retain a strong sense of cultural identity. Despite their immigrant backgrounds, this community demonstrates substantial political independence, suggesting an evolving civic engagement. The concentration of young and middle-aged professionals points to a demographic that is actively shaping the country’s social and economic landscape. As this group continues to balance its Chinese heritage with its New Zealand experience, it is likely to play an increasingly pivotal role in influencing the nation’s multicultural development and political landscape.

Survey Demographics and Family Voting Influence

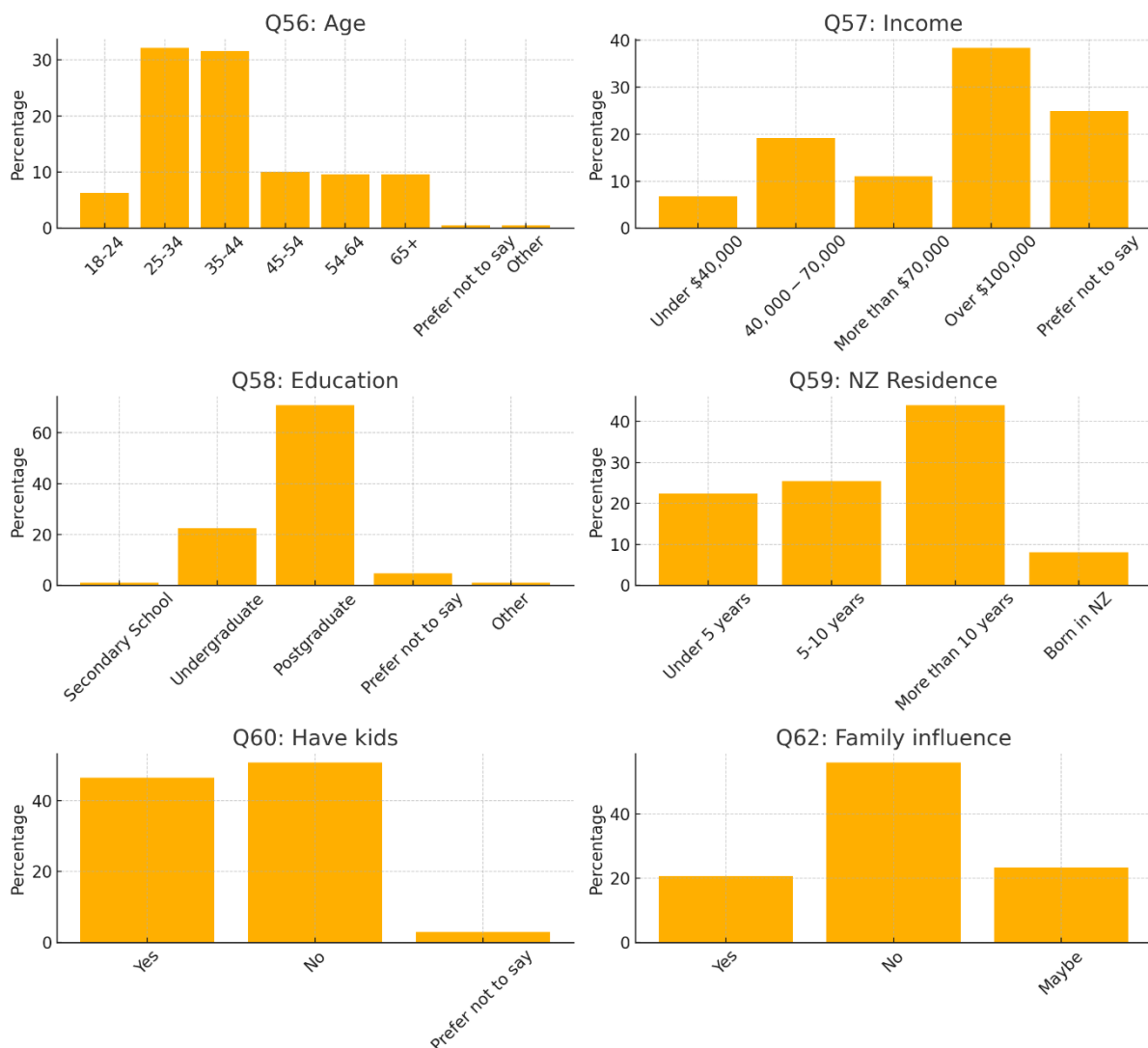


Figure 18 Survey demographics

4.2 Bilingual Platforms and Digital Integration Among Chinese New Zealanders:

The survey results indicated that nearly half of respondents (49.9%) primarily accessed mainstream English-language media in New Zealand, while 31.8% favoured Chinese-language media. This illustrated the bilingual media consumption habits prevalent within the Chinese New Zealand community. However, only 42.6% of respondents reported familiarity with both English and Chinese media outlets. This suggests that while many Chinese New Zealanders engage with mainstream English media, a significant portion continues to rely on Chinese-language sources for their information, reflecting ongoing ties to their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Respondents most frequently consumed New Zealand domestic news (18.4%), international news (12.4percent), and Chinese domestic news (12%). These preferences demonstrate a balanced interest in both local and international events, reflecting the community's dual concerns: staying informed about developments in their home country while maintaining awareness of events in New Zealand. This indicates that the media consumption habits of Chinese New Zealanders are shaped by their transnational identity.

The survey highlighted strong engagement with digital platforms and social media, with 27.1% and 25.5% of respondents frequently subscribing to these services. Additionally, 61.7% of participants reported using chat applications multiple times per day, and almost half of the respondents accessed social media and media content during their free time. This finding underscores the centrality of digital media in the everyday lives of Chinese New Zealanders, where traditional media such as TV, radio, and newspapers are increasingly supplemented or replaced by digital platforms.

An overwhelming majority (90%) of respondents used WeChat (微信), and 60% of them followed New Zealand-related official accounts (公众号). These official accounts, managed by New Zealand businesses, government entities, universities, and Chinese-language media, served as vital sources of information for the Chinese New Zealand community. The dominance of WeChat illustrates its multifaceted role, acting both as a communication tool and as an aggregator of news, tailored specifically to meet the information needs of this community.

The media consumption patterns revealed in this survey suggested that Chinese New Zealanders navigated a dual connection between their country of origin and their adopted home. They demonstrated a strong interest in developments in China while staying informed about local events in New Zealand. This dual media engagement, facilitated by the coexistence of traditional and digital platforms, particularly WeChat, highlights the importance of diverse, localised information streams for this community.

Chinese-language media in New Zealand serves a large potential audience of making it a significant media market. This media presence plays a crucial role in connecting Chinese New Zealanders with both the local Chinese community and broader Chinese affairs, providing content that is culturally relevant and tailored to their unique needs.

This section revealed a hybrid media consumption pattern among Chinese New Zealanders, who utilised both English and Chinese-language platforms to stay informed. WeChat, in particular, emerged as a key tool, with 90% of respondents using the platform and 60% following New Zealand-related official accounts. This suggests that, while traditional media retains some relevance, digital platforms—especially WeChat—are increasingly becoming the primary means through which Chinese New Zealanders stay connected to both their heritage and their local context. The community's media consumption is deeply integrated into their daily lives, reflecting their dual connection to both New Zealand and China.

Survey Responses (Q4-Q8, Q15-Q17, Q33)

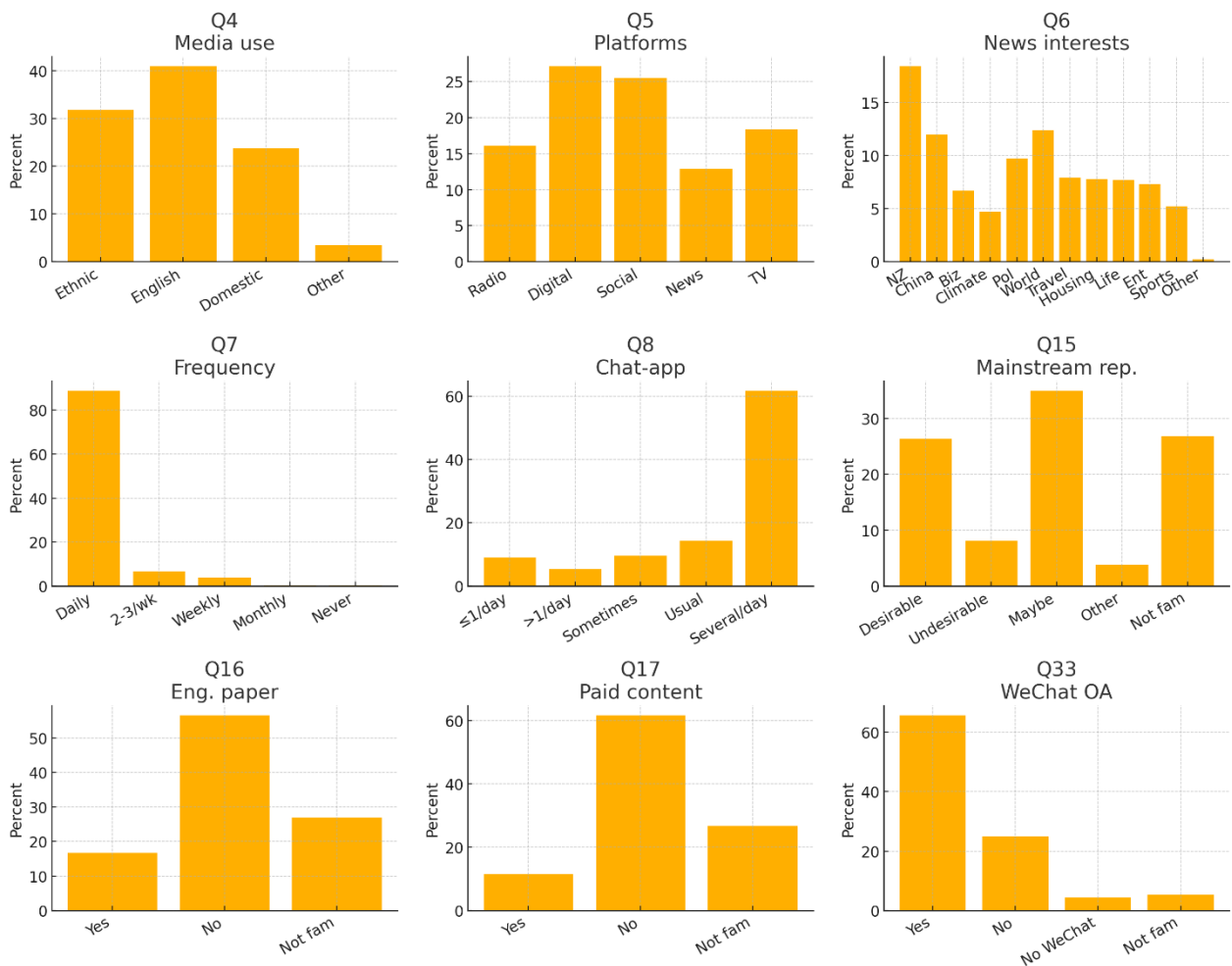


Figure 19 Bilingual platforms and digital integration among Chinese New Zealanders

4.3 Trust, Bias, and Cross-Cultural Understanding in the Chinese New Zealand Community

Only 26.3% of participants expressed satisfaction with the coverage of Chinese community-related news, such as COVID-19 policies, the Hong Kong National Security Law, and the Chinese Lunar New Year, in mainstream English-language media. In contrast, 8.1% of respondents found this coverage undesirable. A significant factor contributing to this perception was the COVID-19 pandemic, which many participants believed exposed biases in English-language media. More than 70% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, indicating a widespread belief that

New Zealand's English media presented biased or incomplete portrayals of Chinese affairs and the Chinese community.

A relatively small proportion of respondents reported subscribing to English-language digital content, with only 16.7% subscribing to newspapers and 11.5% to digital media platforms. Among those who did subscribe, 66% were primarily motivated by the desire to stay updated on current affairs. The “paywall” model, which requires paid access to content, is generally unpopular within the Chinese community. This can be attributed to the widespread availability of free content on Chinese-language social media platforms like WeChat (微信), which integrates functions of WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, and provides free access to news from official accounts. Additionally, language barriers may make Chinese-language media more accessible and preferable to some migrants.

The survey found that the main reasons Chinese New Zealanders accessed mainstream English-language media was to stay informed about current affairs (97.4%), to engage in discussions with colleagues, friends, and family (39.2%), and to better integrate into New Zealand’s mainstream society (35.3%). These findings suggest that for many Chinese New Zealanders, English-language media serves as an essential tool for maintaining social connectivity and engaging with broader societal discourse.

Over half of the respondents (55.7%) expressed trust in traditional media outlets, including newspapers, radio, and television. This aligns with the findings of Solainayagi and Ponnusamy (2019), which suggested that media content perceived as original and not sourced from secondary outlets is often regarded as trustworthy. Respondents’ trust in media appears to be tied to reliability, with the most favoured outlets being Stuff, the *New Zealand Herald*, and Radio New Zealand, selected by 22.7%, 17.6%, and 14.8% of respondents, respectively.

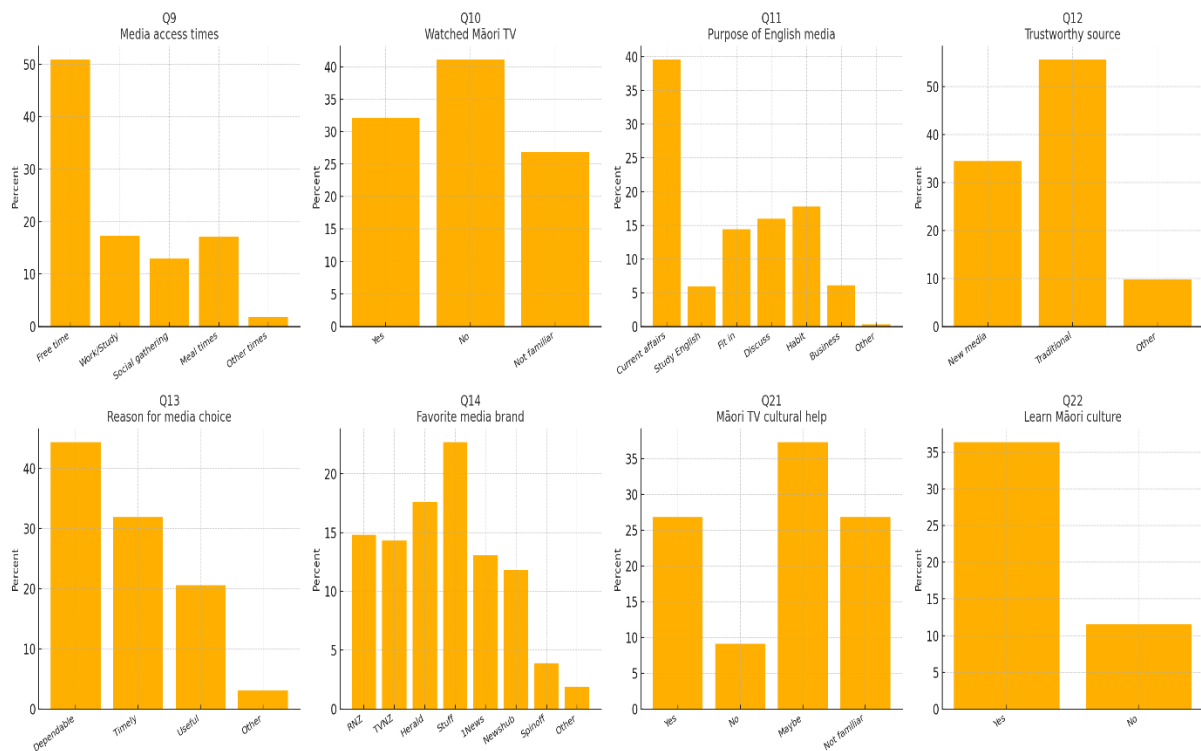
One-third of respondents reported watching Māori TV, and 26.8% believed that it had helped them understand Māori culture in Aotearoa New Zealand. Open-ended responses indicated that while most participants respected and expressed interest in Māori culture, there was still a segment that lacked engagement with Māori media. This suggests that while Māori media holds potential for cultural education within the

Chinese community, there is a gap in active consumption and deeper understanding of Māori traditions.

Although one-third of respondents accessed Māori media, qualitative responses indicate that a significant gap exists in their understanding of Māori culture. While there is a general interest in learning about Māori culture, especially through Māori TV, the depth of engagement remains limited. This points to a need for further efforts in promoting cross-cultural education between the Chinese and Māori communities in New Zealand.

While there is engagement with both Chinese-language and English-language media, concerns about biased representation of Chinese affairs in mainstream English media are prevalent. Trust in media remains a significant factor, with traditional outlets like Stuff, the *New Zealand Herald*, and Radio New Zealand being perceived as reliable. The role of Māori TV in fostering an understanding of Māori culture shows promise, though further engagement is needed. Finally, WeChat (微信) continues to dominate as a key digital platform, offering free, accessible news and communication tools tailored to the Chinese community's needs.

Trust, Bias, and Cross-Cultural Understanding in the Chinese New Zealand Community



4.4 The Role and Challenges of Chinese-Language Media in New Zealand's Media Landscape

A considerable share of participants (33.7%) reported accessing New Zealand domestic news through both Chinese-language and mainstream English-language media. Additionally, Mainland Chinese news (23.4%) and New Zealand housing news (15.4%) emerged as key areas of interest. These findings underscore the role of Chinese-language media in providing information on both domestic and international topics, illustrating its importance in bridging global and local perspectives for the Chinese New Zealand community.

More than half of the Chinese-language media users agreed that helps them stay informed about events in New Zealand, reflecting its significance within the community. Around 60% of participants accessed free Chinese newspapers, while only 22% supported paid Chinese-language media offering original content. This highlights the community's preference for freely available, easily accessible news, potentially influenced by economic factors or cultural norms surrounding media consumption.

Regarding the accuracy of translations from mainstream English-language media into Chinese, only 28.8% of respondents found the translations to be accurate. Meanwhile, 35.1% of participants were uncertain about their quality. This raises concerns about the reliability of translated content and suggests that the perceived accuracy of Chinese-language media could impact its credibility among readers.

Satisfaction with Chinese-language media was reported by 33.6% of participants. However, a portion of respondents identified areas for improvement, with 21% calling for more in-depth reporting and 14.1% requesting bilingual content. The primary reasons for choosing Chinese-language media were ease of understanding (38.3%) and the preservation of cultural background (26.5%), emphasising the media's role in maintaining linguistic and cultural continuity for the Chinese community in New Zealand.

Nearly 90% of respondents were familiar with Chinese-language media, accessing it predominantly through WeChat (微信), reflecting the platform's prominence. Around half of the participants used various media platforms, including social media, digital platforms, newspapers, radio, and television, to stay informed. This highlights WeChat's growing influence as a central hub for news consumption and communication within the Chinese New Zealand community.

Open-ended responses from participants highlighted that Chinese media helped them better understand New Zealand's current affairs, particularly for those with limited English proficiency. Positive feedback emphasised that Chinese media aligned with community values and cultural backgrounds. However, concerns were raised regarding translation accuracy, the potential for misunderstandings, and the risk of misinformation.

The key role of Chinese-language media was seen as facilitating the integration of migrants into New Zealand society by providing accessible information on local events. Additionally, it functions as a communication platform within the Chinese community and serves as a bridge between New Zealand and Mainland China. Survey results support this, with respondents confirming that Chinese-language media aids in understanding New Zealand's affairs.

Chinese-language media faces several challenges, particularly the lack of original content, driven by financial constraints, limited journalist resources, and a relatively small target audience. Most Chinese-language outlets are self-funded, with the exception of RNZ 中文, making it difficult to compete with mainstream English-language media in terms of production quality and resources.

A further challenge stems from the skill gap in the journalist workforce. Many Chinese-language media professionals have experience in Mainland China, which may not always translate well to the New Zealand media environment. For instance, during Chris Hipkins' appointment as Prime Minister, English-language media focused on personal anecdotes to connect with local audiences, while Chinese media directly translated the content without accounting for cultural nuances.

Moreover, Chinese-language media primarily cater to first-generation migrants and recent arrivals, posing challenges in producing content that resonates with the broader community, especially younger generations.

WeChat (微信) has emerged as a pivotal platform for news consumption, with 90% of respondents actively using it. The platform's significance was demonstrated during the 2020 New Zealand general election, where political parties successfully engaged the Chinese community by publishing Mandarin-language articles on WeChat. This demonstrates WeChat's growing role in facilitating political engagement and disseminating information within the Chinese New Zealand community.

Chinese-language media plays a crucial role in addressing the information needs of Chinese New Zealanders, especially for those with limited English proficiency. WeChat's dominance highlights its potential to shape both political engagement and community communication. However, Chinese-language media faces notable challenges, particularly in producing original, culturally relevant content and adapting journalistic practices to the New Zealand context. Overcoming these hurdles will be essential for Chinese-language media to further enhance their role in facilitating integration and fostering cross-cultural exchange.

The Role and Challenges of Chinese-Language Media in New Zealand's Media Landscape

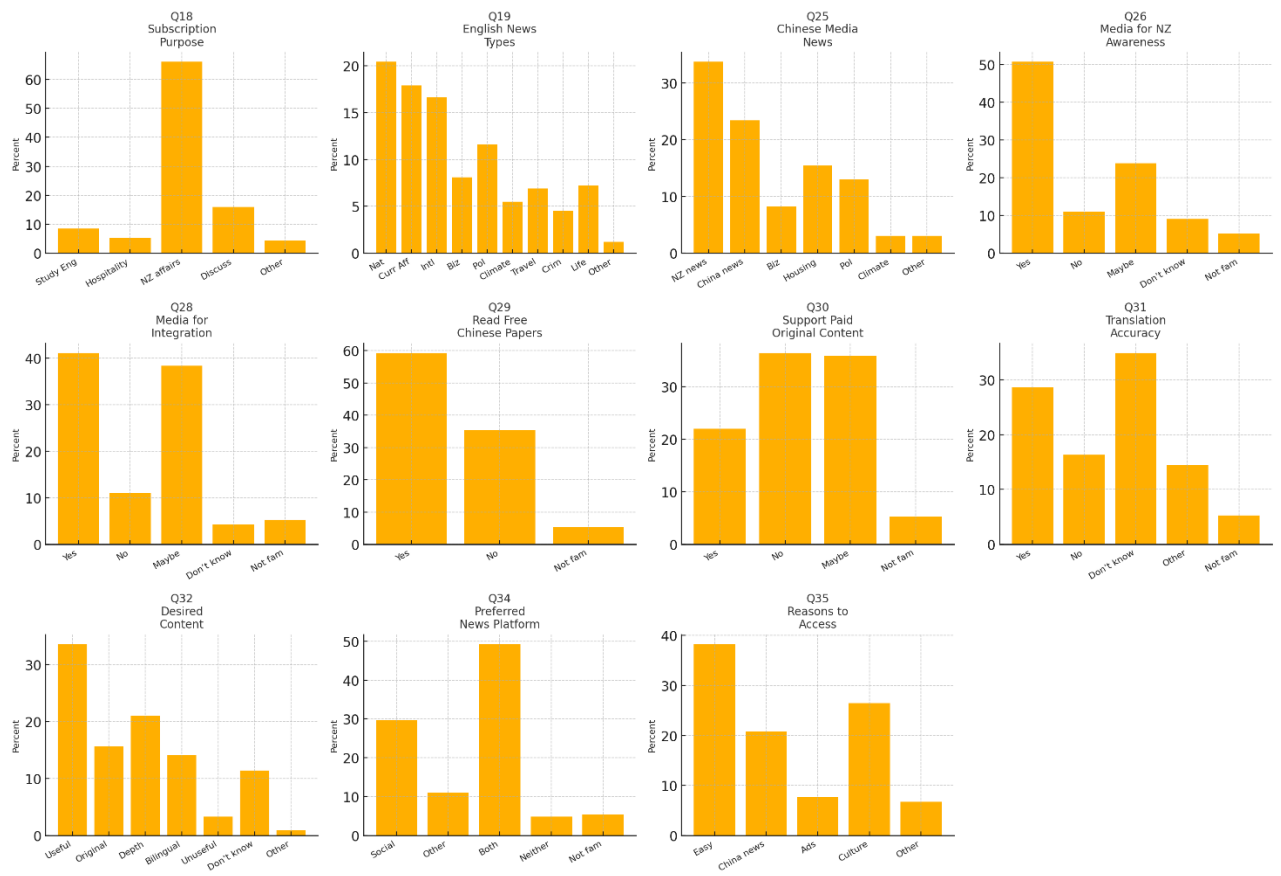


Figure 21 The Role and Challenges of Chinese-Language Media in New Zealand's Media Landscape

4.5 Media Influence and Voting Behaviour:

More than half of the respondents reported accessing election news through both mainstream English-language media and Chinese-language media. However, 12.9% of participants did not follow media coverage at the time of the election. Interestingly, only 4.3% of respondents considered Chinese-language media to be neutral in its election coverage. On the other hand, 59.8% thought that both English-language media and New Zealand-based Chinese media were equally neutral. This reflects some scepticism towards the neutrality of Chinese-language media when reporting on election-related topics.

Barker and McMillan (2017) identified several factors that influence Asian New Zealanders' voter turnout, including ease of enrolment, trust in the political system, civic duty, and the right to express political preferences in a democracy. However, two key inhibitors were also identified: a lack of political information available in voters' mother tongues and the length of residence in New Zealand. The survey's mixed method approach confirmed Barker and McMillan's findings, with some qualitative differences regarding what influences voting turnout within the Chinese New Zealand community. These qualitative insights will be addressed in the next subsection.

Chinese New Zealanders' participation in the 2020 general election was just about average, with 81% voter turnout (Electoral Commission, 2020). Quantitative data from the survey suggests that visa restrictions were one of the reasons that some participants did not vote in the election. Previous studies (Xia, 2022) highlighted that New Zealand's voting regulations, which allow permanent residents to vote after two years of residence, are relatively accommodating. However, confusion over eligibility criteria still exists, with some uncertainty about residency requirements for voting.

During the 2020 general election, the issues of greatest interest to Chinese New Zealanders were housing prices (50.7%), medical issues (46.4%), and environmental concerns (32.5%). These priorities differed slightly from their preferred types of news, showing that voters were most engaged with matters directly impacting their lives.

McMillan and Barker (2021) argued that Chinese-language media in New Zealand exhibited a bias towards the National Party, potentially influencing voters. In

qualitative interviews, however, the majority of interviewees did not believe either English-language or Chinese-language media was fully neutral in reporting on the election. These findings reinforce the community's perception of media bias but also suggest that this bias did not decisively influence voting behaviour, as many respondents continued to engage with both media sources.

The primary reasons respondents voted for a particular party or candidate included party policies, the economy, and education. During the 2020 general election, issues such as the economy, tax policy, immigration, housing, health, welfare, and environmental issues were prioritised in descending order of importance. Despite the challenges faced by Chinese-language media, a majority of participants continued to support the National Party, although Jacinda Ardern maintained a slight lead over Judith Collins as the preferred Prime Minister, at 7.2%. Over 67% of respondents voted in the 2020 election, and the primary reasons cited for voting were a sense of civic duty, interest in politics, and giving the Chinese community a voice.

Around 21.5% of participants attended election-related campaigns, and half of the respondents agreed that advertising in Chinese media would attract more voters. This indicates a potential area for political parties to engage more actively with the Chinese community through targeted media outreach.

Televised leadership debates were influential for many respondents, with 65.3% having watched at least one debate, and 69.4% reporting that these debates influenced their voting decisions. Satisfaction with the debates was high, with 74.5% expressing satisfaction or partial satisfaction with the three televised debates.

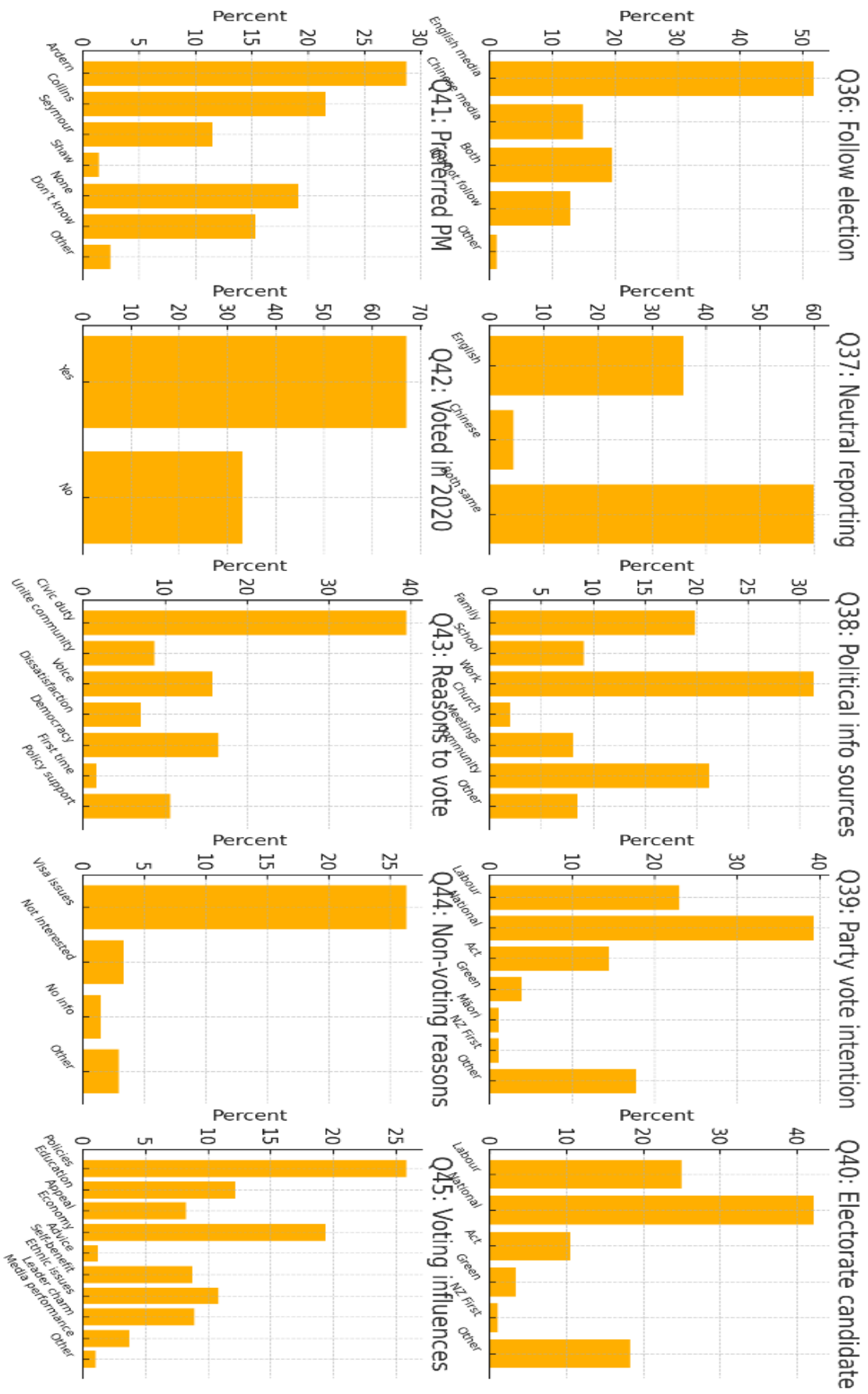
Approximately 45% of respondents reported seeing media workers, such as anchors, publicly express their preferences for political parties. However, 44% did not believe that these expressions would influence their final voting decisions. This suggests that while media figures may be perceived as expressing biases, these biases are not necessarily determinative for many voters.

More than half of the participants expressed continued interest in reading election analysis after the general election, and the same proportion indicated that they would follow political news until the next election in 2023. This points to a sustained engagement with political discourse within the Chinese New Zealand community.

The survey highlighted that Chinese New Zealanders may take a more passive approach to voting compared to the broader electorate. Several factors were identified as influencing voting behaviour within this community, including length of residency in New Zealand, understanding of democracy, occupation, language proficiency, and educational background. Additionally, while Chinese New Zealanders are increasingly engaged with politics, the survey indicates that there is still a lack of clarity regarding democratic processes, such as the purpose of voting and how to align one's political preferences with personal values.

Chinese New Zealanders showed significant interest in issues that directly affect their community, such as housing, healthcare, and the environment. Although their political preferences align closely with those of the broader electorate, factors such as language barriers, visa restrictions, and media bias influence their voting behaviour. Chinese-language media, while playing an important role in providing information, faces challenges regarding bias and accuracy. Nevertheless, Chinese New Zealanders are gradually becoming more engaged in the political process, although there remains room for increased understanding of democratic participation and the broader electoral system.

Elections Engagement and Media Trust among Chinese NZers (Q36-Q45)



Political Engagement and Future Information Practices (Q46-Q55)

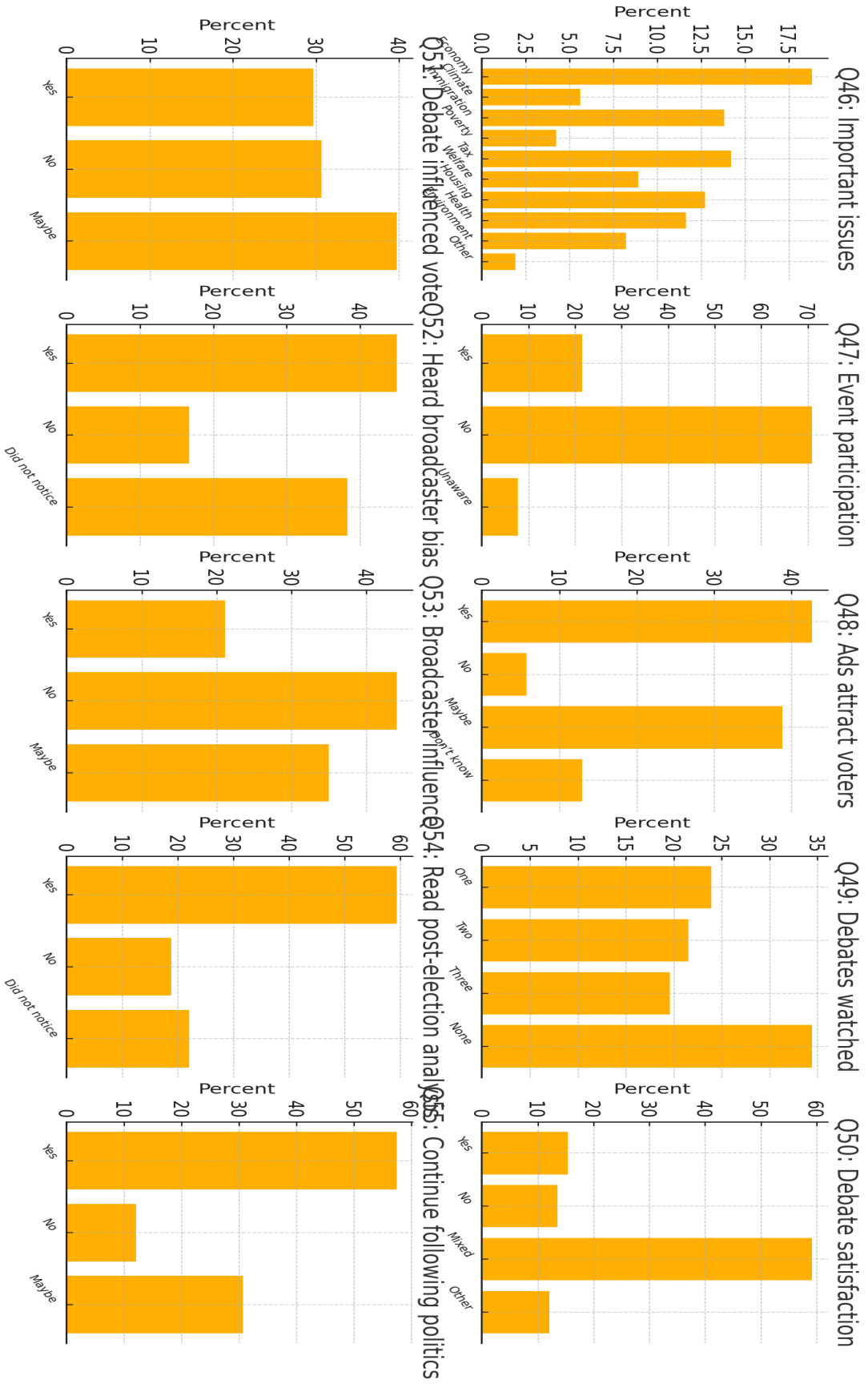


Figure 22 Media influence and voting behaviour

4.6 A Quantitative Survey Analysis of Political Engagement Among Chinese New Zealanders

The survey provided comprehensive insights into the media consumption, political engagement, and voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders during the 2020 general election. The quantitative findings shed light on the complex relationship between media influence, cultural identity, and political participation within this community.

Chinese New Zealanders engage with both English- and Chinese-language media, a reflection of their bicultural identity. While many rely on English-language media for election-related news, Chinese-language media remains a vital source of information, especially for those with limited English proficiency. Over 90% of respondents used WeChat (微信), a key platform for accessing Chinese-language news, reflecting the platform's centrality in media consumption for this community. This bilingual consumption pattern suggested that Chinese New Zealanders sought to balance their cultural heritage with their need to integrate into New Zealand society.

Despite the perceived bias in media, respondents displayed a sophisticated approach to voting, prioritising political party policies, economic concerns, and education over media influence. While McMillan and Barker (2021) argued that Chinese-language media's bias towards the National Party could sway voters, most respondents in this survey did not feel media bias was a decisive factor in their voting choices. Instead, deeper political preferences, particularly alignment with the National Party's policies, played a more significant role. This finding indicates that Chinese New Zealanders critically assess the information they receive from media sources and base their decisions on substantive issues.

The survey highlights several barriers that limit full political engagement among Chinese New Zealanders. Language barriers, the lack of political information in Chinese, and confusion about voting eligibility were common challenges that contributed to a more passive approach to voting. These results echo previous research by Barker and McMillan (2017), which identified similar inhibitors to voter turnout among Asian communities.

For newer migrants, understanding the complexities of New Zealand's political system and democratic processes remains a hurdle. In contrast, longer-term residents tend to be more politically active. These findings suggest a need for targeted civic education initiatives that provide accessible political information in multiple languages, which could help enhance political engagement within the Chinese community.

Chinese-language media, particularly WeChat (微信), plays a crucial role in bridging the information gap for those with limited English proficiency. The survey found that over half of the participants accessed election news through Chinese-language media, with WeChat serving as the primary platform. WeChat's official accounts, like those used by political parties, offer fast and effective communication, attracting users with their accessibility. However, challenges, such as a lack of original content, financial constraints, and perceived bias, limit the full potential of Chinese-language media. To better serve its audience, Chinese-language media in New Zealand must invest in original reporting and adopt more nuanced approaches to local political issues.

A significant number of respondents voted out of a sense of civic duty and a desire to give the Chinese community a voice in the political process. This reflects an evolving sense of civic responsibility, as well as a growing recognition of the importance of political participation in shaping policies that affect the community. However, qualitative data from the survey suggest that many Chinese New Zealanders still lack a clear understanding of the democratic process, particularly in terms of aligning personal values with political party platforms.

The survey supports agenda setting theory (Brown & Deegan, 1998), which argued that media shape public opinion rather than simply reflecting it. This theory was evident in the influence of social media, particularly WeChat (微信), on the voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders. The National and Labour parties both used WeChat to reach Chinese voters, and the platform became a critical tool for political engagement. Despite this, the survey found that some respondents switched support from the National Party to the Act Party, likely due to the instability within National's leadership during the election period. The findings indicate that, while media can

shape public opinion, voters are also influenced by broader political contexts, such as leadership changes and party policies.

One of the key findings of the survey is the diversification of media use among Chinese New Zealanders. Participants are no longer reliant on a single platform for news, accessing a range of media outlets, including both Chinese- and English-language sources, as well as social media. This diversification allows respondents to cross-check information and form more informed opinions. However, concerns about the accuracy of Chinese-language media translations persist, particularly among non-native English speakers and recent migrants from Mainland China.

For those in jobs that require a high level of English proficiency, accessing both Chinese- and English-language media is essential to ensure the accuracy of information. This highlights the importance of providing reliable and accurate news in both languages to meet the diverse needs of the Chinese community.

The survey offers valuable insights into the political engagement and media consumption habits of Chinese New Zealanders during the 2020 general election. While the community is increasingly engaged with politics, barriers such as language, media bias, and limited understanding of democratic processes still hinder full participation. Chinese-language media, particularly WeChat (微信), plays a vital role in bridging the information gap, but challenges remain in ensuring the accuracy and neutrality of reporting.

As Chinese New Zealanders diversify their media consumption, greater efforts in civic education, media reform, and political outreach will be essential to fully integrate this community into New Zealand's democratic process. Ultimately, Chinese New Zealanders are becoming more active participants in the political landscape, but further work is needed to ensure their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed in a meaningful way. This shift is closely linked to the ideas presented in Chapter Five, which examines in-depth interviews and minority voter participation. The qualitative approach of this chapter, using individual interviews rather than focus groups, emphasises the value of creating a safe, personalised

environment to understand the unique challenges and motivations of Chinese New Zealand voters.

Chapter Five In-Depth Interviews and Minority Voter

Engagement

Interviewing has often been likened to a marriage: it is widely recognised, many engage in it, yet each interaction reveals a complex world of nuances and subtleties hidden behind the surface (Oakley, 1981). In this study, a one-on-one approach was employed for in-depth interviews. The choice to use individual interviews over focus groups was guided by Li's (2013) study on the 2005 New Zealand general election, which found that focus group participants sometimes felt uncomfortable, spoke less, or had safety concerns in group discussions. Given these findings, one-on-one interviews were seen as providing a safer and more comfortable space for participants, allowing for deeper exploration of their perspectives and more tailored questioning (Brennen, 2017).

Prior to the formal interviews, a pilot study was conducted with four participants. Feedback from the pilot was generally positive and offered valuable insights for refining the formal interviews. One participant, however, expressed hesitation in discussing politically sensitive topics, signalling the need for cautious handling of such issues in the main study. Overall, the feedback underscored the importance of the research, particularly in highlighting minority voter turnout as a crucial element of democracy in Aotearoa. It also emphasised the growing influence of political parties' promotional strategies on popular social media platforms within the Chinese community and their impact on election outcomes.

5.1 Political Preferences Among Chinese New Zealanders

The political preferences of Chinese New Zealanders are shaped by a complex array of factors, including party policies, leadership characteristics, media influence, and personal values. While quantitative data indicates a strong preference for the National Party—with 39% of the party vote and 42.1% of the electorate vote—the qualitative interviews provide deeper insight into the reasoning behind these preferences and the various elements that influence voting decisions.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the significant influence of party policies in shaping voting decisions. More than half of the respondents highlighted that their choice was predominantly driven by specific policy areas, especially concerning the economy, immigration, education, and foreign affairs.

Participants underlined the importance of sound economic management, particularly in light of the post-COVID-19 recovery. They expressed a preference for a government capable of managing financial challenges and fostering economic growth. For some voters, immigration policies and New Zealand's diplomatic relationship with China were pivotal considerations. These respondents sought policies that would streamline migrant integration and maintain positive diplomatic ties.

*Economy and immigration policy. A good immigration policy could help migrants live in New Zealand easier. I would focus on the economy since post-Covid. I hope the future government must be good at finance.
(Interviewee 5)*

Party policy. Most Chinese New Zealanders think the economy matters, especially post-Covid. The relationship with China and the immigration policy will affect me as well. (Interviewee 4)

The leadership style of party heads and the unity within political parties also emerged as critical factors in determining voter support. Respondents expressed preferences based on leaders' perceived effectiveness, charisma, and approachability, as well as the cohesion and stability of political parties.

Jacinda Ardern's personable leadership and empathetic approach resonated with some voters, influencing their support for the Labour Party. In contrast, the leadership style of Judith Collins was perceived as less approachable.

Discontent with the internal dynamics of the National Party, especially its perceived disunity during the 2020 election, led some voters to shift their support to other parties.

A party leader's charm is essential. National Party former leader Judith Collins, the character is shown, is a bit overpowering—not as approachable as the former PM, Jacinda Ardern. (Interviewee 9)

I think the policy. But last election, the National Party was too messy and not united. I voted for the Labour Party. (Interviewee 7)

Media coverage and discussions within social circles played a substantial role in shaping the perceptions of party positions and leadership. Exposure to election-related content through media and informal discussions with friends, colleagues, and family members influenced voters' understanding and decisions.

Several respondents acknowledged that media coverage influenced their impressions of candidates and parties. Although media was not the sole factor, it was a notable component in the decision-making process.

Engaging in political discussions within professional and personal networks helped voters evaluate how party policies would affect their individual circumstances, particularly within specific industries.

The media influences voters more than half the time, and conversations with friends, colleagues, and family influence voters somewhat. Finally, it is the personal political beliefs. (Interviewee 2)

We may talk about election news with colleagues. A large percentage of the same social class supports the same political party. For example, I am working in the civil engineering and building industry, so the National Party could win the election. The benefit will be lower interest rates and interest rate cuts. (Interviewee 2)

For some participants, aligning their vote with their personal values and considering the long-term vision for the country were key decision-making factors. Respondents considered how policies and leadership would impact the broader society and future generations.

Several voters focused on party policies that addressed their personal interests, particularly in education, healthcare, and social welfare.

Voters expressed a desire for comprehensive, forward-thinking plans that addressed both immediate needs and long-term societal challenges.

I'm focused on my interests, like immigration, education. I looked at the party policies and any differences and then decided. (Interviewee 6)

You need to understand their agendas and how well their agendas will fit for the society and community. Also, fit for the context at that time. We hope their perspective can put a long-term prospect towards this whole society.

(Interviewee 17)

A sense of political disillusionment or disappointment was evident among some respondents, affecting their engagement with the political process and trust in politicians.

Some voters expressed dissatisfaction with politicians who, in their view, failed to fulfil promises after being elected. This wave led some to question the reliability of political figures and the sincerity of their campaigns. This sense of doubt sometimes prompted voters to reconsider traditional party allegiances or vote based on the perceived integrity of individual candidates rather than party policies.

I have been following the Hamilton MPs' social media pages and meetings. Just looked at what they have been doing. I found it very interesting that right before elections, you would hear a lot from these candidates. I've been following them for three years, and maybe 80 or 90 percent of them, as soon as they got the position, got the vote, they disappeared on social media.

(Interviewee 16)

If I do decide to vote, it's because I'm very disappointed in politics, not policies. People don't hear from them anymore. Very few people keep doing stuff. (Interviewee 16)

The in-depth interview findings underscore that while the National Party holds a quantitative lead among Chinese New Zealanders, voting behaviour is driven by a multifaceted array of influences. Party policies, particularly in economic and immigration matters, are central to voters' choices. However, leadership qualities, party unity, media influence, social interactions, personal values, and levels of trust in politicians also play significant roles.

These insights reflect broader political behaviour trends, where voters make decisions based on a combination of rational policy evaluations and emotional responses to leadership and party cohesion. Media and social networks are

influential in shaping political preferences, highlighting the importance of how information is disseminated and discussed in social settings.

Additionally, disillusionment with the political system and politicians presents a challenge for parties seeking to maintain voter trust and engagement. Political parties may need to enhance transparency, keep consistent communication with constituents, and follow through on their commitments to address these concerns.

The factors shaping voting patterns among Chinese New Zealanders are diverse, involving considerations of party policy, leadership dynamics, media influence, and personal values. As New Zealand heads towards future elections, political parties will need to address these various factors to engage effectively with this growing demographic and foster inclusive political participation. Understanding the nuanced voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders will be crucial for promoting political representation and civic engagement.

5.2 Multifaceted Influences on Voting Behaviour: Economic, Social, and Cultural Factors Shaping the 2020 New Zealand Election Choices

In this section, political attitudes were analysed through the lens of the Equality Positioning Scale (Sibley & Wilson, 2007), focusing on key elements of equality and entitlement within New Zealand's socio-political environment. The qualitative interviews offered insights into how Chinese New Zealanders navigate their political choices, reflecting personal interests, party policies, leadership qualities, media influence, and the evolving multicultural landscape.

A dominant theme emerging from the interviews was the importance of party policies in shaping voting decisions. Most respondents expressed the view that their vote was closely aligned with policies that addressed their personal and professional interests, particularly concerning the economy, immigration, and taxation.

Economic management, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, was highlighted by many respondents as a key factor in their voting decisions. They sought parties that demonstrated competence in handling fiscal matters and promoting economic recovery.

Immigration policies were another critical issue for voters, particularly for those who had recently migrated or were concerned about family reunification. Education

policies were also significant, especially for respondents working in or affected by the tertiary education sector.

The economic policy will lead my voting decision. I don't care much about the Covid response; it's a global pandemic beyond any party's control.

(Interviewee 2)

Immigration, education, and the government's funding for research are what I'm most interested in. (Interviewee 3)

Leadership qualities and party cohesion were identified as crucial factors in voter decision-making. The interviews revealed a preference for parties with charismatic, empathetic leaders who could present a unified front during the election campaign.

Several participants mentioned Jacinda Ardern's empathetic leadership and approachability as important factors in their support for the Labour Party. Conversely, former National Party leader Judith Collins was seen as less approachable, which influenced some voters to shift their support away from the National Party. The perceived internal disunity of the National Party during the 2020 election campaign was a significant concern, pushing some voters towards Labour. Party unity was viewed as a reflection of effective governance.

The National Party was too messy and disunited. I ended up voting for Labour. (Interviewee 7)

A party leader's charm is essential. Judith Collins came across as too overpowering, not as approachable as Jacinda Ardern. (Interviewee 9)

Media consumption and social interactions played an essential role in shaping the political perspectives of voters. While some respondents were influenced by election coverage in mainstream and Chinese-language media, others relied more on discussions within their social and professional networks.

While media exposure shaped initial impressions of candidates and parties, many participants noted that personal interactions and social networks were equally, if not more, influential in shaping their voting behaviour.

Engagement with peers and family members during election time was common, and these discussions often clarified policy issues, especially in professional sectors like

engineering, where specific policies (e.g., on housing or taxation) directly affected the voters.

The media influences voters a lot, but conversations with colleagues and family also have an impact on my political choices. (Interviewee 2)

We talk about election news at work. Most people in my field support the National Party because their policies on housing and interest rates benefit us. (Interviewee 2)

Voters emphasised the importance of aligning their political choices with personal values, particularly concerning social justice and equality. Some voters explicitly avoided parties or candidates that they perceived to be discriminatory or anti-Chinese.

For many voters, avoiding parties perceived as discriminatory or anti-immigrant was a guiding principle. This was particularly relevant for respondents from immigrant backgrounds who felt targeted by certain political narratives.

Some respondents expressed a desire for parties that presented a long-term vision for New Zealand, particularly in terms of economic recovery and the future of social services like healthcare and education.

My bottom line does not racist and anti-Chinese.(interviewee 1)

My bottom line is no discrimination. I would not vote for any party that discriminates against minorities. (Interviewee 2)

You need to understand a party's long-term vision. What will their policies mean for society in the future? (Interviewee 17)

Some respondents expressed frustration or dissatisfaction with the political process, particularly with politicians who failed to deliver on their promises. This sense of disengagement was often tied to experiences of unmet expectations or perceived inconsistency in political campaigning.

Many participants shared that politician often failed to maintain a connection with their electorate after elections. This erosion of trust led some voters to base their decisions more on local issues and candidates' actions within the community.

As a result of their disillusionment, some voters focused more on candidates who demonstrated active, ongoing engagement with the local community, rather than solely relying on national party leaders.

Once they win, many politicians disappear from the public eye. That's why I've lost confidence. (Interviewee 16)

I look at the local MP's work rather than just focusing on party leaders. (Interviewee 16)

The most common issues influencing voting decisions were the economy, taxation, immigration, and housing. These concerns were consistently raised by respondents as the most significant during the 2020 election.

The state of the economy was a central issue for many voters, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery. Respondents often cited tax policies and fiscal responsibility as key factors in their electoral choices.

Housing affordability and immigration policies were also significant concerns, particularly among newer migrants who faced difficulties in integrating into the New Zealand housing market or navigating immigration regulations.

The economy is my top priority. Tax policy is closely linked to that. (Interviewee 4)

Housing prices are a major issue, especially for the Chinese community. (Interviewee 7)

The qualitative data offers valuable insights into the voting behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders, revealing a nuanced interplay between policy preferences, leadership qualities, media influence, and personal values. The findings align with broader trends observed in political behaviour research, where voters balance economic concerns, party leadership, and social values when making electoral decisions.

Moreover, the role of media and social networks in shaping voter preferences emphasises the importance of accessible, reliable information in fostering informed political engagement. The dissatisfaction expressed by some voters regarding the

political process suggests that political parties must focus on maintaining transparency and ongoing communication with constituents to build long-term trust.

Voting behaviour in the 2020 New Zealand general election was shaped by a combination of personal interests, party policies, and leadership qualities. For Chinese New Zealanders, economic policies, immigration, and housing were among the most significant factors influencing their decisions. As New Zealand continues to evolve politically and demographically, understanding these complex motivations will be crucial for fostering inclusive political representation and addressing the concerns of diverse communities.

Media Consumption and Identity Among the Chinese Diaspora in New Zealand

This theme delves into the motivations behind media consumption habits of the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand, highlighting how cultural identity, accessibility, and political awareness drive engagement with Chinese-language media. Previous quantitative research revealed that 45% of participants identified as Chinese, while nearly a third chose the term "Chinese New Zealanders". When asked why they accessed Chinese-language media, 38.3% cited ease of comprehension, and 26.5% emphasised cultural preservation.

Many interviewees reported accessing Chinese-language media as a means of maintaining ties with their culture and staying informed about events in their homeland. The choice of platforms varied among participants, with WeChat and TikTok being popular sources for many. Some interviewees demonstrated a strong interest in political news, particularly concerning the relationship between China and New Zealand. Several respondents expressed a distrust of official news sources.

I want to know what is happening in China even though I am living and working in New Zealand. (Interviewee 8)

I prefer the news written by the reporter; platforms like TikTok are more suited to the younger generation. (Interviewee 3)

The relationship between China and the country where I live is essential as a member of the diaspora. (Interviewee 2)

I stopped reading Feng Huang (凤凰)... Xinhua (新华) is too official. I prefer Zhihu (知乎)² for more nuanced news. (Interviewee 3)

Technology played a crucial role in maintaining ties with China for participants who had lived in New Zealand for many years. Some participants highlighted the challenge of balancing their Chinese identity with their integration into New Zealand society.

Motherland, you will always have the connection. You wouldn't be able to disconnect, although I'm so far away from home. (Interviewee 17)

I'm fully engaged in New Zealand life and Chinese life, and I explore different perspectives to understand the news. (Interviewee 17)

The findings from these interviews provide insight into how the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand navigates their media consumption habits to maintain cultural connections, stay informed about both China and New Zealand, and balance multiple identities. While platforms like WeChat and TikTok are widely used for news, the trust in official sources varies, with some preferring alternative platforms that offer more balanced perspectives.

Participants' motivations for accessing Chinese-language media reflect a combination of cultural preservation, political engagement, and the need to remain connected with their homeland. At the same time, there is an underlying scepticism about official Chinese media, with many participants seeking to cross-reference different sources to obtain a more objective view of current events.

This part illustrates the complex relationship between media consumption and identity for the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand. Chinese-language media plays a critical role in helping individuals stay connected with their homeland while navigating their lives in a new country. The findings reveal a diverse range of motivations for engaging with media, from maintaining cultural ties to staying informed about political developments and seeking balanced perspectives on current affairs. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of media consumption

² Zhihu (Chinese: 知乎; pinyin: Zhīhū) is a Quora-type question and answer site and news aggregator.

patterns within migrant communities and highlight how technology facilitates the preservation of cultural identity across borders.

5.3 Patterns of Political Engagement and Media Consumption

The qualitative research highlights a variety of approaches that Chinese New Zealanders use to access election news, with many participants actively engaging with political information and discussions during election periods. These engagement patterns provide valuable insights into how Chinese New Zealanders approach political participation and the factors that influence their voting behaviour.

A majority of interviewees proactively sought out election news, motivated by a strong sense of civic duty and a desire to stay informed about New Zealand's political landscape. This is particularly significant for immigrant communities, who view political engagement as essential to ensuring representation and fairness within the system.

One interviewee underscored that voting is not only a right but also a fundamental responsibility for immigrants, reflecting the broader belief that participating in the democratic process is crucial for contributing to the country's governance.

Some participants actively engaged with various media platforms, such as the *New Zealand Herald*, to obtain balanced perspectives on party policies and political debates. For some, political engagement went beyond civic duty and intersected with their professional responsibilities or personal interests, especially among those working in public service or media.

Voting is a basic right and obligation for the Chinese community, especially as immigrants. It's the most important thing we can do when we come to New Zealand. (Interviewee 10)

I tried to watch and read about all of the parties just to get a handle on what their issues were. I engaged a little bit, not too much. (Interviewee 14)

Of course, I am a journalist. I look at the news every single day. (Interviewee 15)

A smaller subset of interviewees accessed election news more passively, often through social media or in casual discussions with friends or family members.

Some participants relied heavily on platforms like Facebook to stay informed about the election, encountering articles from mainstream outlets or government pages accidentally while browsing.

For these individuals, election news was not something they sought out deliberately, but rather something they encountered in the background of casual conversations or social interactions.

All my information came from Facebook, where I would see New Zealand Herald articles, Stuff articles, and government pages. (Interviewee 16)

I accessed election news for casual talk with colleagues. (Interviewee 9)

Some participants, particularly those more deeply involved in politics, relied less on media coverage for information about election policies and instead drew on their own experiences and direct involvement.

For example, a interviewee noted that they did not depend on media for election updates, as they were already well-acquainted with their party's policies.

Another participant who working within the Chinese-language press explained that their engagement with English-language election news primarily involved re-editing and translating articles for the Chinese community.

I do not rely on the media for election party policy because, as a Member of Parliament, I already know what our policies are going into an election. (Interviewee 11)

Our task is to read as much as possible from English media, re-edit, and publish in Chinese media that target the Chinese community. (Interviewee 5)

The research also revealed the increasing importance of social media platforms like WeChat (微信) and Little Red Note as primary sources of election-related information. These platforms provide easy access to news on party policies and candidate profiles, often shared by users within the Chinese New Zealand community.

Many participants found social media to be a convenient way to access election news, with its content tailored to their language and cultural context.

WeChat was my main source for election news. I encountered articles about party policies and candidate profiles. (Interviewee 16)

This shift towards social media as a central platform for political information reflects a broader trend among immigrant communities, where the accessibility and cultural relevance of these platforms are crucial to political engagement.

The interviews highlighted varying levels of political participation within the Chinese New Zealand community. While some individuals were highly engaged and communicated with politicians directly, others exhibited more passive engagement. Despite the increasing visibility of Chinese candidates in New Zealand politics, direct interactions with these candidates remained limited among most interviewees.

Several participants indicated that they had not communicated with any Chinese candidates during the 2020 election, underscoring a potential gap in direct political outreach within the community.

However, some participants did express support for Chinese candidates, recognising the importance of their presence in New Zealand's political system.

No, I didn't contact any Chinese candidate during the 2020 election. (Interviewee 6)

I admire the courage of the Chinese candidates. Some Chinese candidates from local elections were seeking support, and I'm fully supportive. (Interviewee 1)

The qualitative findings illustrate the diverse ways in which Chinese New Zealanders engage with political news and the election process. While many respondents actively sought out election news, others engaged passively, often relying on social media or casual conversations to inform their voting decisions. The centrality of platforms like WeChat (微信) in providing accessible political information underscores the importance of culturally relevant media for immigrant communities.

The limited direct engagement with politicians, despite the growing presence of Chinese candidates, suggests an area for improvement in political outreach. Political parties and candidates could foster stronger connections with the Chinese

community by increasing direct communication and engagement during election periods.

Chinese New Zealanders exhibit a wide range of political engagement behaviours, from actively seeking out election news to relying more passively on social media for information. As the Chinese New Zealand community continues to grow, their influence on the political landscape is likely to increase. To effectively engage with this demographic, political parties and candidates will need to better understand the community's motivations and preferences, ensuring that Chinese New Zealanders are well-represented in New Zealand's democratic processes.

5.4 The Evolving Landscape of Media Use—From Traditional Media to New Media

One prominent theme from the interviews was the convenience and accessibility of social media platforms, especially WeChat (微信), which emerged as a central hub for accessing political news. Many participants rely heavily on these platforms for real-time updates and easy access to news content.

Several participants emphasised the importance of WeChat (微信) as their primary news source. The platform provides immediate access to both local and international news, which can be shared and discussed within their social networks.

Other participants appreciated the opportunity to compare news from various international outlets, highlighting the platform's ability to offer multiple perspectives on the same political topics.

It must be WeChat (微信). My team sends me links, and even electronic versions or web news are sent through WeChat (微信). (Interviewee 13)

I can read newspapers from New Zealand but also compare the same topic with American or UK newspapers. (Interviewee 16)

Despite the rise of digital platforms, a number of interviewees still expressed a preference for traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and radio. They cited these sources as being more reliable due to established editorial standards and fact-checking procedures.

Many participants viewed traditional media outlets as more trustworthy compared to social media, where the spread of misinformation is more common. Traditional sources were seen as offering well-researched, accurate reporting.

For some, traditional media remained part of their daily routine, providing in-depth coverage that digital platforms did not always offer.

I prefer traditional media like newspapers, radio, and TV. Some digital information doesn't tell the full story. Traditional media is more trustworthy. (Interviewee 5)

I still prefer reading newspapers. I think many people still listen to the radio while working or driving. (Interviewee 1)

Although social media offers convenience, several participants raised concerns about its drawbacks, particularly the prevalence of misinformation and the fragmented nature of the content. They noted that the short, bite-sized nature of social media posts often lack the depth needed for serious political analysis.

Some participants expressed frustration with the limited depth of social media content, particularly for political news. The rapid spread of misinformation was also a concern, as it undermines the quality of the news being consumed.

Additionally, some participants mentioned concerns about censorship on platforms like WeChat (微信), which limited the scope of political discussions, especially regarding sensitive topics.

Social media platforms like WeChat (微信) and Twitter offer bite-sized news, but this format is not suitable for in-depth political commentary. (Interviewee 3)
WeChat (微信) has censorship. It's a tool to communicate with family in China, but we avoid posting sensitive political content to prevent our accounts from being banned. (Interviewee 7)

Several participants preferred using digital platforms, such as news websites and apps, which combine the convenience of social media with the reliability of traditional news outlets. These platforms were seen as flexible and user-friendly, offering news without the distractions of advertisements.

Participants highlighted the convenience of accessing news through digital platforms, noting that they allowed for personalised consumption of news without the clutter of social media.

Some interviewees adopted a hybrid approach, utilising both digital and traditional media. For instance, they would read news apps during the week and switch to physical newspapers on weekends for more comprehensive coverage.

I prefer digital platforms—less advertising and more flexibility. I can access the news whenever I want. (Interviewee 18)

I read news online during the week, but on weekends, I prefer physical newspapers for more in-depth stories. (Interviewee 12)

The shift from traditional to digital and social media represents a significant change in how Chinese New Zealanders access political news. While platforms like WeChat (微信) provide convenience and global perspectives, traditional media remains an important source for those seeking reliable, in-depth coverage. This diverse media landscape reflects broader global trends, where news consumers balance the accessibility of social media with the credibility of traditional outlets.

The interviews also underscore the importance of critically evaluating news sources. While digital platforms offer immediacy and convenience, participants recognised the potential for misinformation. As the consumption of political news evolves, the challenge will be ensuring that users can discern reliable information amid the vast array of sources available online.

Chinese New Zealanders employ a range of media sources to stay informed about politics, from traditional outlets like newspapers and radio to digital platforms and social media. While social media offers ease of access and diverse perspectives, concerns about the quality and depth of information persist. Moving forward, it will be crucial for both news platforms and consumers to navigate the balance between accessibility, reliability, and in-depth analysis to maintain informed political participation.

5.5 Bridging Cultural Understanding Between Māori and Chinese Communities in New Zealand

Living in a bicultural country like New Zealand, new immigrants, including the Chinese community, are exposed to Māori culture as part of their integration process. Quantitative data indicates that approximately one-third of respondents have watched Māori TV, although 37.3% remain sceptical about whether Māori TV can truly help migrants understand Māori culture. On a positive note, 36.4% of participants expressed a desire to learn more about Māori culture, reflecting an underlying curiosity and willingness to engage further.

Several key themes emerged from the qualitative analysis, highlighting the factors influencing how Chinese New Zealanders interact with Māori culture.

One of the primary challenges faced by Chinese immigrants is the language barrier, which limits their ability to engage fully with Māori culture and media. Several interviewees acknowledged that their understanding of Māori culture was limited due to their lack of proficiency in Te Reo Māori.

No, because I do not understand the content. But my son talks to me about Māori culture he learned at school. For example, counting in Māori or telling Māori stories. So, I know a little through him. (Interviewee 5)

This reliance on children's learning as a means of cultural transmission underscores the significant role that schools play in fostering cultural understanding among immigrant families. However, the language barrier still presents a substantial obstacle for adults trying to engage directly with Māori content.

Another common theme is that many Chinese New Zealanders possess a shallow or stereotypical understanding of Māori culture. Some participants mentioned only familiar aspects, such as the haka or common Māori greetings like "Kia ora", reflecting a surface-level engagement with Māori cultural elements.

I know the haka. Māori culture is often associated with crime, poverty, and welfare in the media. (Interviewee 15)

These limited and often negative perceptions align with findings in existing literature that highlight how cultural stereotypes can overshadow more complex understandings of indigenous cultures. Such shallow engagement may be reinforced by media representations that focus on particular aspects of Māori culture, without offering deeper insight.

Interestingly, some participants drew comparisons between Māori and Chinese cultures, particularly in relation to values such as family and community. These shared cultural values provide a potential bridge for deeper cross-cultural understanding and engagement.

I've learned about Māori culture as part of my job. Over time, I've found that Māori and Chinese cultures share similarities, especially around the importance of family. (Interviewee 1)

This recognition of cultural parallels suggests that cross-cultural learning could be facilitated by highlighting shared values and experiences between Māori and Chinese communities. Scholars have argued that creating “third spaces”, where different cultural elements intersect, can encourage deeper engagement and mutual understanding between diverse groups.

For many participants, learning about Māori culture was linked to their work or professional environment, where knowledge of Māori customs and language was seen as essential. This professional requirement often motivated them to seek out more information about Māori culture, even if it wasn't initially a personal interest.

Such responses suggest that Māori culture plays a significant role in New Zealand's professional landscape, particularly in public service and academia, where understanding and engaging with indigenous culture is an expectation. This highlights the institutional efforts to integrate Māori culture into the daily lives of professionals in New Zealand.

While most participants expressed respect for Māori culture and the Treaty of Waitangi, a few voiced concerns about the perceived political privileges afforded to Māori under the Labour government. This sentiment reflects a broader debate within New Zealand society regarding how best to balance the rights of Māori with those of other ethnic groups.

I don't watch Māori TV, but I've had several training sessions at work. I use some Māori phrases in emails because it's important for my job in government. (Interviewee 7)

I think the Labour government is doing a lot to help Māori, but sometimes it feels like they're being given too much priority, which creates tension with other groups. (Interviewee 8)

These comments highlight a complex intersection of respect for Māori culture and apprehension about perceived preferential treatment. This perspective resonates with global discussions on indigenous rights, where the line between recognition and perceived privilege is often contested.

Despite the challenges and concerns expressed, most participants acknowledged the significance of Māori culture in defining New Zealand's national identity. Māori culture was seen as unique and something that sets New Zealand apart from other countries, particularly within the Commonwealth.

Māori culture is unique to New Zealand. It's one of the reasons this country stands out from others, and it's important for us to learn and respect that. (Interviewee 2)

This recognition underscores the broader value that Māori culture holds in shaping New Zealand's cultural landscape, not just for Māori themselves, but for the wider population, including immigrants.

The qualitative findings explain a complex and multifaceted relationship between Chinese New Zealanders and Māori culture. While there is a willingness to engage and learn, language barriers and superficial perceptions often limit deeper understanding. However, the parallels identified between Māori and Chinese values offer a promising avenue for fostering cross-cultural dialogue and learning. Furthermore, the role of Māori culture in professional and educational settings helps integrate indigenous customs and knowledge into the daily lives of immigrant communities.

Chinese New Zealanders' engagement with Māori culture reflects both challenges and opportunities. Language barriers and cultural stereotypes present significant hurdles, but there is a growing recognition of the importance of Māori culture in

shaping New Zealand's identity. As New Zealand continues to promote biculturalism, efforts to bridge the cultural gap between Māori and immigrant communities, including the Chinese, will be crucial for fostering a more inclusive and understanding society.

This study highlights the need for continued efforts to make Māori culture more accessible to immigrant communities, particularly through education and media. By building on shared cultural values and addressing existing barriers, New Zealand can strengthen its commitment to cultural inclusivity and equity for all its citizens.

5.6 Motivations for Voting in the 2020 General Election

This part has explored the various motivations behind Chinese New Zealanders' voting behaviours during the 2020 general election. Through qualitative insights, it became clear that civic duty, familial influence, media engagement, and, in some cases, frustration with the political system were primary drivers. These motivations underscore the importance of political participation as a means of representation and influence within New Zealand's democratic processes. As the Chinese New Zealand population continues to grow, the potential for this demographic to shape future elections is significant, pointing to the need for greater political engagement and awareness within the community.

A prominent theme among interviewees was the emphasis on exercising their democratic right to vote. Many viewed voting as not only a civic duty but also as a crucial means for minority groups, like the Chinese community, to make their voices heard within New Zealand's political landscape. The sense of responsibility to vote was tied to the belief that political engagement is essential for achieving recognition and influence.

One participant actively campaigned to boost Chinese voter turnout, highlighting the potential political impact of this demographic. Other respondents underscored the importance of voting as both a right and a responsibility, particularly for women and minorities, referencing historical struggles to secure these rights.

Only by voting can they have a voice, be taken seriously, and have influence. There is no reason not to vote. (Interviewee 10)

It's such a privilege to be able to vote. For me, there is no doubt about it that one must vote, especially for women. (Interviewee 12)

For some interviewees, voting was a tradition passed down through their family, with parents serving as role models for political participation. This familial influence highlighted the role of cultural and social values in shaping voting behaviours among immigrant families.

Our family has always voted. We go to the same place to vote in every election. (Interviewee 13)

Media played a significant role in shaping voting decisions for several participants. Many developed a habit of staying informed about political events through news broadcasts or social media. The constant presence of political news, especially during election periods, meant that even those who might not actively seek it out were exposed to political discourse.

A few participants expressed dissatisfaction with the political system, which at times led them to reconsider their decision to vote. Some had abstained from voting in previous elections due to disillusionment but felt compelled to participate in the 2020 election.

I have developed the habit of watching the news at six since high school. Some political news, you can't avoid even if you want to. (Interviewee 13)

I did vote in the 2020 election. If I didn't vote in the previous election, it was because I was very disappointed. (Interviewee 16)

Survey data revealed that 26% of respondents prioritised party policies, with a particular focus on key issues such as economic (20%) and education (13%) policies. This aligns with the qualitative findings, where participants emphasised democratic rights, civic duty, and the importance of policy as motivating factors.

Chinese New Zealanders are becoming increasingly aware of the influence they can exert within the country's democratic processes. With an estimated 200,000 eligible Chinese voters, the data suggests that their participation could significantly impact election outcomes. One interviewee likened this potential to the influential role the

New Zealand First Party played as a "kingmaker" in the 2017 election, emphasising the strategic importance of Chinese voter participation.

The Chinese community's potential voting bloc of 80,000 to 90,000 could have even greater significance. (Interviewee 10)

Chinese New Zealanders' motivations for voting are deeply rooted in a sense of civic duty, family influence, and a desire for political representation. Media engagement, as well as disappointment with the political process, also influenced voting behaviour. As this community grows more conscious of its political potential, increasing voter participation among Chinese New Zealanders could have significant implications for New Zealand's democratic landscape.

5.7 The Influence of Political Issues on Chinese New Zealanders' Voting Decisions

This section examines how political considerations either impacted or did not impact their voting choices, reflecting broader attitudes towards leadership, policy, and governance.

For some participants, political issues played a key role in shaping their voting preferences. These voters were particularly attuned to matters such as the relationship between New Zealand and China, economic policies, and leadership qualities. These concerns were viewed as critical to their decision-making process.

Yes, and the relationship with China will affect my voting as well. (Interviewee 4)

More or less, it will influence me. I will also look at the party leader's capability. (Interviewee 18)

In contrast, other interviewees indicated that political issues had little to no impact on their voting decisions. These participants expressed disappointment with the current government or felt that the political landscape did not heavily influence their choices. Their decisions were shaped by broader considerations, rather than specific policy issues. Some voters expressed interest in specific policy areas, such as the economy and climate change. While they did not emphasise political issues as a whole, certain policies had the potential to sway their voting decisions.

Those issues could not influence my voting. I am disappointed with the current government. (Interviewee 7)

Not really. I was focusing on [the] Covid response. (Interviewee 9)

Maybe the economy and climate change policy would influence my voting decisions. (Interviewee 8)

A few participants highlighted the importance of practical and realistic policy implementation when deciding who to vote for. They emphasised the need to evaluate whether political parties could realistically deliver on their promises, taking a more strategic approach to their voting choices.

Having some idea about the likelihood of the political parties implementing those policies is important. They don't have to be grand policies; they must be realistic. (Interviewee 3)

The findings show that political issues played a varied role in influencing the voting decisions of Chinese New Zealanders during the 2020 general election. While some participants viewed specific political matters as central to their decision-making, others were less influenced by policy issues, focusing instead on broader factors such as leadership and overall governance. This diversity in perspectives highlights the complex nature of voting behaviour in this community, where strategic considerations, practical policies, and personal values intersect to shape electoral choices.

Chapter Six Key Insights into Chinese New Zealanders' Political Participation, Media Influence, and Community Relations

The 2020 New Zealand general election offered a valuable lens for exploring the political behaviour of Chinese New Zealanders. Through qualitative research, several key themes emerged, shedding light on how this community engages with politics, media, and cultural relations.

This section synthesizes the quantitative and qualitative findings on the media consumption habits and political engagement of Chinese New Zealanders. By examining both statistical trends and in-depth perspectives, the study offers insights into how this community's unique position within New Zealand society shapes their voting behaviour, media trust, and civic participation. This integrated approach highlights the complex factors influencing their political decisions, from economic policy concerns to the role of social media and cultural identity.

The findings reveal that party policies, especially those concerning economic management, immigration, and foreign relations, are critical in shaping Chinese New Zealanders' voting choices. Quantitatively, economic policies emerged as a leading concern, reflecting the community's interest in financial stability and recovery post-Covid -19. This emphasis on policy aligns with a rational-choice approach to voting, where individuals prioritize issues that directly impact their economic well-being and integration within New Zealand. Economic and immigration policies were particularly influential, with the quantitative trends substantiated by qualitative data that highlighted the personal and professional relevance of these policies to respondents' lives.

Leadership qualities and party unity also emerged as significant factors in determining political preferences. Survey data indicate that leadership style influenced a substantial portion of respondents, supported by qualitative insights revealing preferences for leaders seen as approachable, empathetic, and unified. The 2020 New Zealand general election demonstrates a nuanced view of political leadership, where personal charisma and party cohesion are key elements

influencing support. These preferences underscore the role of affective elements in voting behaviour, reflecting how emotional connections to party leaders can enhance political engagement.

The data show a distinctive pattern of bilingual media consumption, with many respondents accessing both English- and Chinese-language media. This bilingual engagement reflects the bicultural identity of Chinese New Zealanders, who simultaneously seek integration within New Zealand society and maintain ties to Chinese culture. The high usage of Chinese-language media for cultural preservation purposes aligns with the concept of transnationalism, where immigrants engage with media from both their home and host countries to retain a dual connection. This consumption pattern supports the maintenance of cultural identity while enabling access to New Zealand's political landscape, facilitating a hybrid bicultural experience.

The dominance of WeChat as a primary platform for news and social interactions highlights its role as an essential media tool for Chinese New Zealanders. Its popularity, coupled with the use of New Zealand-based official accounts, emphasizes WeChat's significance not only for general news consumption but as a medium for political information and community engagement. The reliance on WeChat underscores the need for accessible, culturally relevant platforms that cater to immigrant communities, and illustrates how digital media can bridge informational gaps for ethnic minorities. A notable 93 percent of Chinese community members used ethnic websites in the past week, and 92 percent engaged with WeChat (微信). This demonstrates that ethnic websites and social media platforms, especially WeChat (微信), serve as the primary sources for news, information, and communication, with much lower usage of non ethnic media. It indicates a preference for media that aligns with their cultural and linguistic needs.

The research reveals that language barriers pose a major challenge for the Chinese community when communicating with government organisations. Nearly 47 percent of respondents reported facing difficulties in accessing government information due to the lack of content in Chinese. Given that the majority of respondents opted to complete the survey in Chinese, it is evident that the government needs to better cater to the language needs of ethnic communities when disseminating information.

When accessing government services, the Chinese community primarily relies on government websites (63%), followed by family and friends (47%) and social media (32%). However, it is noteworthy that 31% of respondents stated they did not know where to access government information, highlighting potential gaps in communication channels and the accessibility of critical information for some community members.

The media consumption habits of the Chinese community reflect a degree of diversity. In addition to social media and websites, 41 percent of respondents read ethnic print media in the past month, 45 percent listened to ethnic radio, and 34 percent watched ethnic television. This indicates that the Chinese ethnic media across various platforms holds some influence, particularly in communities where cultural and linguistic ties are strong.

Despite some engagement with non-ethnic media, the data shows relatively lower usage than the ethnic media. Only 13 percent of respondents used non-ethnic websites, whilst 22 percent watched non-ethnic TV stations, and a further 31 percent listened to non-ethnic radio. This reflects weaker connections between the Chinese community and mainstream New Zealand media, further emphasising their dependence on the ethnic media.

The research suggests opportunities for government improvement in communication strategies. While the Chinese community relies on online channels and personal networks for government information, 31 percent of respondents expressed uncertainty about where to find such information. This underscores the need for enhanced language support and greater use of the ethnic media to effectively reach and inform these communities.

The findings indicate a complex relationship between trust and perceived bias in both mainstream English- and Chinese-language media. Satisfaction with English-language media coverage of Chinese issues was low, with respondents perceiving coverage as incomplete or biased, especially during sensitive events like COVID-19. This dissatisfaction with mainstream media resonates with Agenda Setting theory, where media narratives shape public perceptions, often prompting selective engagement with alternative sources. In contrast, suspicions about the apparent bias

of the Chinese-language media in favour of certain political parties highlight the critical and evaluative approach of Chinese New Zealanders in assessing media sources from both linguistic backgrounds.

Engagement with Māori culture through platforms like Māori TV was moderate, with many respondents expressing interest in further understanding Māori culture, though limited by language barriers and stereotypical portrayals. This reflects both an openness to bicultural engagement and the existing challenges in achieving cross-cultural understanding. The findings suggest that while institutional support for Māori culture in professional environments helps foster engagement, deeper cultural connections require accessible resources and outreach that address linguistic and cultural barriers.

Voting among Chinese New Zealanders was primarily motivated by a sense of civic duty and the importance of community representation within New Zealand's political system. The quantitative and qualitative data together show that respondents viewed political participation as a means to secure influence and recognition, emphasizing a strong commitment to civic engagement. This aligns with theories of minority representation, which posit that marginalised groups are motivated to engage politically as a means of ensuring their voices are heard and interests protected within the broader democratic framework.

Family influence also played a role in fostering a culture of political engagement, with voting often framed as a tradition within families. However, a notable portion of respondents expressed disillusionment with politicians who failed to fulfil promises or maintain visibility after elections. This frustration with the political system challenges the traditional loyalty to parties, indicating an evolving political identity that prioritizes accountability and reliability over established party affiliations. This shift suggests a critical approach to political engagement, where the efficacy and integrity of candidates play a substantial role in determining voter support.

Chinese New Zealanders displayed a strategic approach to voting, focusing on realistic and actionable policies rather than grand promises. This practical evaluation of party platforms indicates that respondents prioritized feasible policies, especially in economic and social sectors that directly impact their community. The emphasis on strategic voting aligns with rational-choice theory, where voters seek policies that

realistically address their interests, ensuring that promises are both achievable and relevant to their socioeconomic contexts.

This integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals a nuanced landscape of political engagement among Chinese New Zealanders. Party policies, particularly those related to economic stability and immigration, remain primary drivers of voting behaviour, reinforced by personal and affective connections to party leaders. Bilingual media consumption patterns underscore the community's dual identity, while trust in media varies based on perceived biases and cultural alignment.

Chinese New Zealanders' commitment to civic duty and political participation is balanced by a pragmatic evaluation of policies and a critical approach to media. This approach highlights both the challenges and opportunities for political and media engagement within this growing demographic. Political parties and media outlets seeking to engage this group effectively will benefit from addressing issues of representation, policy relevance, and cultural inclusivity, ultimately contributing to a more integrated and equitable democratic landscape in New Zealand.

Conclusion

The recent report 'Perceptions of Asia 2020' Asia New Zealand Foundation (2021) shows that 73% of all New Zealanders think that developing political, social and economic ties with Asia is very important, compared to 67% in 2019. But 35% believe that China poses a threat to New Zealand. Interestingly, the first response when asked about the word 'Asia' was China, at 33% (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2021). Regarding the media consumption component, 68% of New Zealanders get their Asia-related information from news and social media while 54% of New Zealanders believe that the New Zealand mainstream English media covers Asia fairly. Also, this 31% of people of Asian ethnicity in New Zealand access Asian media every week.

'New Zealanders' awareness of the Belt and Road Initiative – China's global development strategy – reached its highest level to date, with 45 percent saying they had at least some knowledge' (quote from Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2021. para 21).

China is New Zealand's largest trading partner, with two-way goods and services trade now exceeding \$32 billion a year and over 200,000 Chinese migrants living in New Zealand (RNZ, 2021). The ethnic and mainstream media provide a way to help migrants fit into mainstream society and share the diverse communities' values of New Zealand. Furthermore, politicians in New Zealand share party policies, news and information on media platforms to attract voters. This practice can seem curious to new immigrants from mainland China because of the different social systems in China and New Zealand. Therefore, ethnic Chinese media can provide a bridge, a connection between migrants and New Zealand mainstream society. I hope this research will provide new data and information to increase understanding of media consumption amongst Chinese diasporic communities in New Zealand.

This study highlights the multifaceted political engagement of Chinese New Zealanders, shaped by economic priorities, media consumption patterns, civic motivations, and the intricate relationship between China and New Zealand. Chinese New Zealanders, composed of both long-term residents and recent immigrants, show diverse voting preferences influenced by formative cultural experiences. With

approximately 90% identifying as overseas born, this community's political orientation reflects the significant impact of conservative cultural values and economic interests, leading many to align with right-wing parties known for policies on economic conservatism and regulated immigration.

Chinese New Zealanders demonstrate strong support for policies that prioritize economic growth, tax cuts, and free-market principles. This preference reflects the values of a predominantly middle-class demographic focused on financial security and wealth accumulation, aligning with rational-choice theory, where voting behaviour is driven by policies that directly impact economic well-being. The National Party, with its support for free-market economics, tax reductions, and assistance for small and medium-sized enterprises, frequently garners support among Chinese New Zealanders. Immigration is another area of focus; established Chinese New Zealanders express concerns about lenient immigration policies potentially straining social resources, highlighting a nuanced approach to policy evaluation based on socio-economic security (Wang, 2007).

China–New Zealand relations substantially influence the political orientation of Chinese New Zealanders, who generally favour parties advocating for diplomatic and economic cooperation with China. While diverse viewpoints exist, there is a general tendency to support parties like the National Party, historically viewed as fostering positive relations with China. This diplomatic emphasis highlights how foreign relations influence voting patterns within ethnic communities, underscoring the importance of policies that respect both cultural affiliations and local socio-political values. Chinese New Zealanders' engagement demonstrates the community's strategic approach to voting, which considers both national policy priorities and international diplomatic ties.

Chinese New Zealanders' media consumption patterns reveal challenges related to language barriers and understanding New Zealand's democratic system, with a significant reliance on Chinese-language media, especially WeChat. This platform provides access to culturally relevant news and supports the maintenance of cultural ties. However, this reliance on the ethnic media, often featuring ads from right-wing or mainstream parties, can restrict exposure to a full spectrum of political options, potentially leading to the misconception that fewer parties are involved in elections.

The findings suggest that increased inclusivity in Chinese-language media could enhance access to comprehensive political information, reducing information silos and fostering more informed voter participation.

A strong sense of civic duty drives political engagement among Chinese New Zealanders, as they view voting as essential for ensuring their community's representation within New Zealand's democratic framework. Yet, disillusionment stemming from unmet political promises and perceived inconsistencies in candidate performance affects trust and party loyalty. The findings suggest that political parties seeking support from this demographic should prioritize consistent and direct engagement. The Chinese proverb “一回生，二回熟” (“First time, a stranger; second time, a friend”) reflects the community's emphasis on familiarity and regular interaction, underscoring the importance of building sustained relationships to gain voter trust and support.

This study offers significant contributions to the literature on immigrant political engagement by elucidating how economic interests, cultural identity, media habits, and international relations intersect to shape Chinese New Zealanders' political identity. The findings align with rational-choice theory and underscore the impact of cultural factors on political behaviour within immigrant contexts. The prominence of WeChat and the emerging influence of platforms like Little Red Note underscore the growing relevance of digital media tailored to cultural and linguistic needs, supporting not only information accessibility but also political inclusivity.

Future research should delve deeper into the role of social media platforms like WeChat and Little Red Note in shaping political attitudes and behaviours within immigrant communities. Specifically, analysing WeChat Official Accounts and their influence on political trust and engagement would provide a nuanced understanding of digital media's role in fostering political agency. Moreover, expanding studies to consider media bias and representation across other minority groups could yield insights into media trust and fairness within New Zealand's multicultural democracy. Increasing sample diversity to include other cities would further enhance the representation of Chinese New Zealanders, broadening our understanding of this demographic's political behaviours.

This research highlights the importance of economic stability, media inclusivity, and sustained civic engagement in fostering a meaningful and representative democratic process for Chinese New Zealanders. As New Zealand's multicultural landscape continues to evolve, addressing these factors will be critical in ensuring equitable representation and political participation. The study underscores the significance of integrating Chinese New Zealanders into the national political dialogue, thereby promoting inclusivity and strengthening New Zealand's democratic foundation for all communities.

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Appendix A Questionnaire

Section 1 of 9

Chinese diaspora, media consumption and political engagement in 2020 New Zealand election 华裔， 华侨媒介消费以及 2020 新西兰大选参与度

Hello, I am JianCheng Zheng, a Ph.D. student in Screen and Media studies at The University of Waikato. My contact email is jz282@students.waikato.ac.nz. My Ph.D. research topic is 'Diaspora, media consumption and political engagement'.

你们好，我是郑建成，怀卡托大学荧幕媒体专业的博士生。我的邮箱是：jz282@students.waikato.ac.nz。我的博士研究课题是“新西兰华裔，华侨媒介消费和政治参与度”。

This questionnaire will explore Chinese New Zealander's media consumption and political engagement in New Zealand, and hopefully will contribute to the next general or local elections. It will help Chinese New Zealanders to access information from ethnic Chinese media, mainstream English language media, or other media, support them fitting into New Zealand society and also give them a voice in New Zealand politics. Build a diverse community in Aotearoa New Zealand.

本问卷会探索华人在新西兰媒介的使用情况以及政治参与度，希望对下一次的全国大选或者地方选举做出贡献。帮助华人从华文媒体，主流英文媒体或其他媒体获取信息，帮助和支持他们融入新西兰社会，可以在新西兰的政治体系中发出华社的声音。打造多元社区。

Any questions concerning the overall research project should be sent to my Chief Supervisor, Dr. Ann Hardy, email: Ann.hardy@waikato.ac.nz or any questions about ethical compliance can be addressed to the Ethics Committee Secretary - email: alpss-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, postal address, Division of Arts, Law, Psychology and Social Sciences, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240.

关于整个项目的问题可以联系我的首席主管 Dr. Ann Hardy(哈迪·安)博士,电子邮件:

Ann.hardy@waikato.ac.nz 或者有关道德合规性的任何问题,可以联系道德委员会秘书 - 邮件: alpss-ethics@waikato.ac.nz, 邮政地址:怀卡托大学, 艺术,法律,心理学和社会科学学院,汉密尔顿, 3240

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics

Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

该研究项目已得到怀卡托大学艺术与社会科学学院人类研究伦理委员会的批准。

Note (温馨提示): 在问卷选项中出现的英文或符号

Tick all that apply 多选

Mark only one oval 单选

Other 其它 (可自行填写答案)

* Required 为必答选项

Section 2 of 9

Self Identity 自我身份认同

1. In this part, please define your identity. 在这一部分,请定义您的身份。
2. Where were your parents born?您的父母在哪里出生?
3. Where was your place of birth? 您在哪里出生?
4. How do you define your identity? 您如何定义自己的身份?

Section 3 of 9

Media Consumption 媒介消费

In this part, the researcher looking to understand your habits of media use.

在这一部分, 研究人员会探寻受众如何使用媒介以及媒介消费习惯

1. What media do you mostly use since you migrated to or grew up in New Zealand? 当您移民到新西兰或在新西兰成长时, 您经常浏览哪些媒体?
2. Which New Zealand based media sources do you mostly use? 您经常浏览哪些新西兰的媒体?
3. The digital platform includes websites, online forums, etc. Enables people to interact with each other on the Internet. 数字平台包括了新闻网站, 网络论坛等。使得人与人可以在互联网平台进行互动, 沟通。
4. What type of news are you interested in? 您对哪些类型的新闻感兴趣?
5. Frequency of using media platforms including radio, newspaper, TV, digital platform, and social media. 您使用媒体的频率 (包括广播, 报纸, 电视, 电子平台和社交媒体) ?
6. How often do you use a chat app? 请您为使用聊天软件的频率打分 (1-10分, 1分为一天一次或很少使用聊天软件, 10分为一天多次使用聊天软件)。

For example: We Chat, Whats App, Facebook, Instagram and so on. 例如：微信，Whats App, 脸书， Instagram 等

7. When do you access social media and media content? 您每天什么时候浏览媒体或使用社交媒体?
8. Are you more familiar with New Zealand mainstream English language media or New Zealand ethnic Chinese media? 您熟悉新西兰主流英文媒体还是新西兰华文媒体?

Section 4 of 9

New Zealand mainstream English language media 新西兰主流英文媒体

Mainstream media (MSM) is a term and abbreviation used to refer collectively to the various large mass news media that influence many people, and both reflect and shape prevailing currents of thought.

主流媒体（MSM）是一个术语和缩写，用来统称各种大型大众新闻媒体，它们影响着许多人，并反映和塑造着当今的思想潮流。

For example, Radio New Zealand, Television New Zealand, Stuff, New Zealand Herald, and so on are New Zealand mainstream English language media. Sky KiWi, Chinese New Zealand Herald, TV33, and so on are New Zealand ethnic Chinese media.

例如：新西兰国家广播电台，新西兰国家电视台，Stuff，新西兰先驱报等都是主流英文媒体。天维网，新西兰中文先驱报，电视 33 频道等都是新西兰华文媒体。

1. If you are familiar with New Zealand English language media, what purpose do you use it for? 如果您熟悉新西兰主流英文媒体，您浏览英文媒体的目的是什么?
2. What kind of mainstream English language media source do you think is most trustworthy? 您认为主流英文媒体中新媒体信息来源可靠还是传统媒体信息来源可靠?
3. Why did you choose that? 您为什么做出上述选择?
4. Which are your favorite media brands? 您喜欢浏览哪些媒体机构的新闻?
5. Do you think it is desirable for the mainstream English language media to report on the Chinese community matters outside New Zealand? 你认为主流英语媒体报道关于新西兰境外华人社区或事件时是否可取?

For example, Covid-19, Hong Kong national security law, the relationship between China and Five Eyes and so on. 例如：新冠疫情，香港国安法以及中国和“五眼联盟”的关系。

6. Do you subscribe to an English language newspaper? 您是否订阅了英文报纸?
7. Do you subscribe to mainstream English language paid digital content? 您是否订阅了英文媒体的付费电子内容?
8. Why do you subscribe to English language newspaper or paid digital content? 您为什么订阅英文报纸或付费电子内容?

If you are not subscribed, please move to the next question. 如果您没有订阅, 请移至下一题。

9. What kind of news do you access from the mainstream English language media? 您主要浏览主流英文媒体中哪种类别的新闻?
10. Have you ever watched Māori TV? 您是否有观看过毛利电视频道?
11. Do you think Māori TV can help you to understand Māori culture? 您认为毛利电视频道是否有助于您了解毛利文化?
12. Would you like to learn about Māori culture? 您是否希望了解毛利文化?
13. Why did you give that answer? 您为什么做出上述选择?
14. Māori culture is part of Aotearoa New Zealand's political environment. For example, 2022 Hamilton local election will introduce two new Māori ward councilors to be elected citywide. 毛利文化是新西兰政治的一部分。例如, 2022 年汉密尔顿地方选举将引入两名新的毛利区议员, 在全市范围内选举。

Section 5 of 9

Ethnic Chinese media 新西兰华文媒体

1. What kind of ethnic Chinese media sources do you know about? 您了解哪些形式的华文媒体?
2. What kind of news do you get from the ethnic Chinese media? 您经常浏览华文媒体中哪些种类的新闻?
3. Do you think ethnic Chinese media helps you to understand what is happening around New Zealand? 您是否认为新西兰华文媒体有助于您了解新西兰主流社会正在发生的事情?
4. Can you provide more details? 您能否解释为什么做出上述选择?
5. Do you think ethnic Chinese media can help migrants to fit into New Zealand society? 您是否认为新西兰华文媒体能帮助移民融入新西兰主流社会?
6. Have you ever read free ethnic Chinese newspapers? 您是否阅读过免费的中文报纸?
7. If Chinese newspapers charge to provide original content, would you support them? 您是否支持华文报纸为提供原创内容进行收费?
8. Most ethnic Chinese media based in New Zealand translate content directly from mainstream English media. Do you think that translation is accurate? 大

多数新西兰华文媒体的内容是从主流英文媒体直译过来的，您认为翻译是否准确？

9. What do you think of the content or information provided by ethnic Chinese media? 您如何认为华文媒体提供的新闻或内容？
10. The social media WeChat is popular in the Chinese communities. Do you subscribe to any WeChat Official Account about New Zealand ethnic Chinese media, political parties, lifestyle and so on? 您是否关注任何与新西兰有关的微信公众号吗？
11. Do you prefer to access daily news on social media or on other media platforms? 您更倾向于使用社交媒体浏览新闻还是其它媒介形式浏览新闻？
12. Why do you access ethnic Chinese media? 您为什么浏览华文媒体？

Section 6 of 9

Chinese diaspora political engagement 华裔政治参与度

1. Did you follow the New Zealand 2020 general election on media platforms? 您是否关注了 2020 新西兰大选的新闻？
2. Who did you find was better at reporting the election neutrally? 您认为主流英文媒体还是华文媒体报道大选时相对客观，中立？
3. What other ways did you get political information of the New Zealand 2020 election? 您还从哪里了解过关于选举的信息呢？
4. If an election were held tomorrow, which party would you support for your party vote? 如果下届大选在明天举行，您将支持哪个政党？
5. If an election was held tomorrow, which party candidate would you support for your party candidate in your area? 如果下届大选在明天举行，您将支持哪个政党的选区议员？（您自己的选区）
6. If an election was held tomorrow, who would you prefer to be Prime Minister? 如果下届大选在明天举行您更倾向于谁当选总理？
7. Did you vote in the 2020 election? 您是否在 2020 新西兰大选中投了票？
8. If you voted, why did you vote? 您为什么投票？
9. If you voted in 2020 general election, please make your selection. 如果您在 2020 大选期间投票了，请进行选择。If you did not vote in 2020 general election, please move to the next question. 如果您未在 2020 大选期间投票，请移至下一道题。
10. If you did not vote, why did not you vote? 如果您没有投票，为什么没有投票？
11. For what reasons do you support particular political parties and candidates? 您为政党和选区议员投票的原因有哪些？
12. What issues were you interested in at election time? 在大选期间，您最关心的议题是什么？

13. Did you participate in any events related to the election? 您是否参加过有关大选的宣传活动?
14. Do you think political parties or candidates advertising on ethnic Chinese media will attract more voters? 您是否认为政党或政党候选人在华文媒体刊登广告会吸引等多选民?
15. There were a total of three television leader debates (Labour and National) during the general election. How many did you watch? 大选期间共进行三次主要政党候选人电视辩论 (工党和国家党), 您观看了几次?
16. If you watched, were you satisfied with the candidates' performance in the television debate? 如果您看过该辩论, 您是否满意候选人在电视辩论的表现?
17. Do you think the candidates' performance in the television debate influenced your political choice? 候选人电视辩论的表现是否会影响您投票选择?
18. Have you ever heard hosts or broadcasters express their support for a political party on TV or radio? 您是否在收音机或电视上听到或看到任何主播在节目中公开表达对政党的倾向?
19. Do you think hosts or broadcasters opinions affected your political choice? 您是否认为上述做法会影响您的投票选择?
20. Did you read any commentary and analysis articles after the election? 您是否会在大选之后继续阅读一些评论员文章或分析文章吗?
21. Do you think you will continue paying attention to political news until the next(2023) election? 您是否会持续关注大选新闻, 一直到下届选举?

Section 7 of 9

Basic information 个人基本信息

The researcher promise that personal information will remain confidential and will be properly safeguarded. 研究者承诺不会泄露任何参与此问卷人员的个人信息。

1. How old are you? 您的年龄?
2. What is your annual family income? 您的家庭年收入是多少?
3. What is your education level? 您的受教育水平?
4. How long have you been in New Zealand? 您在新西兰生活多久了?
5. Do you have kids? 您有孩子吗?
6. What language do you speak at home? 您平时在家里说哪些语言?
7. Will your vote be influenced by your family members? 您的家庭成员是否会影
响您的投票选择吗?
8. What is your profession 您的职业是什么?

Section 8 of 9

Future interview 后续深入访谈 (一对一线下或线上)

Thank you for your patience, would you like to do an in-depth interview with the researcher to morefully discuss your experiences and opinions about media consumption and political engagement? 感谢您耐心填写问卷，您想与研究人员进行深度访谈吗？您可以与研究人员讨论对华文媒体，主流英文媒体和政治参与的想法，经验等。

Contact information 联系方式

This part of the information is only known to the researchers. 此部分信息只有研究人员知道。

How should the researcher contact you? 研究人员如何称呼您？ Would you be able to provide your phone number, email address, or WeChat number? 研究人员如何联系您？（电话，电子邮箱，微信等）

Please leave your details (Any English name, Chinese name or nick name), for example: Mr ZHENG. Cell phone number:1234567, etc.请填写您的个人信息（任何的英文名字，中文名字或别名等），例如：郑先生。手机号码：1234567等。

Appendix B Depth Interview



UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

DIVISION of ARTS, LAW, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Question for depth interview

Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and for participating in the survey last year. The results have been analyzed. The purpose of the follow-up interviews is to conduct a more in-depth discussion of the study with the interviewees.

This interview will take about 45 minutes. This study has been approved by the University of Waikato ALPSS Ethic Committee. If you do not want to be recorded, please tell me. If you do not want to answer any question you do not have to. Participants need to sign the **Information sheet** and **Consent form** before the interview.

General questions:

1. How often do you participate in any online or offline Chinese clubs, communities and organisations? (Which ones, and why?)
2. Do you usually access ethnic Chinese media or English media when you are living in New Zealand? Which one is the more useful for you and why?
3. How do you evaluate your English, Mandarin, Cantonese, or other language that you spoke?
4. What role do media play in your life? (Big/small/part of your life? What kinds of media? In what language?)

Media:

First some questions about the Chinese language media available in New Zealand. The aim is to explore the respondents' media use and their experiences.

News from mainland China or participants' hometown:

5. Do you read any news from mainland China?
 - a) In what media (online, social media, print)?
 - b) From what provider?
6. Why do you read news from mainland China?

New Zealand media landscape:

7. What do you think the difficulties are for new arrivals in New Zealand, and do you think the media could help with any of those difficulties?
8. Do you think mainstream English language media or ethnic Chinese language media will better help immigrants to fit into New Zealand mainstream society?

Māori media sphere in Aotearoa New Zealand:

9. A third of survey respondents had watched Māori TV and would like to learn about Māori culture. Have you watched or learned about Māori television and Māori culture?
10. What is your impression of the place of Māori culture and politics in New Zealand?

New Zealand based Chinese media and new arrivals:

11. Some of the survey participants had read a free New Zealand based Chinese language newspaper. What do you think of the content of these free Chinese newspaper? (Useful? Not useful? Need some improvements? What kinds of improvements?)
12. What do you think the purpose of those Chinese language newspapers is? (Unclear)

What audiences access Chinese language newspaper for? / What is the purpose of media owners starting Chinese language media?

13. Do you think ethnic Chinese language media can help other migrants to fit into New Zealand society? In what ways?

Election information gained through media:

14. What is the main purpose when you access the election news?
15. In what ways, if any, did media influence your voting decision?

16. Now, thinking about the Chinese language media (or English language media), can you recall if it was useful as a source of information on the voting system and the election?
17. Can you recall if it was useful as a source of information about issues you were interested in?
18. Can you recall if it was useful as a source of information about political parties (the major parties, and the minor parties)?
19. Did you read any Chinese language media or English language commentary on the New Zealand 2020 election ? a) If not, did you hear any news from other people or sources about the election?
20. Did the local Chinese language media or English language media coverage give you enough information to help you decide which parties and policies to vote for?
21. Can you think of a particular article, programme or piece of information you found helpful during the election? (where from?)
22. The use of social media and electronic platforms such as WeChat or Sky kiwi, etc. emerged as a new finding in this study. Do you access political (election) news on social media ?
23. Do you prefer to access news on social media? Why? Are there any drawbacks to doing that? Did it provide you with any information from different points of view about New Zealand politics?
24. Do you think that media workers should express their political perspective in their program? (Can you give me an example of when you found this okay or not okay?)
25. Do you think the media (general, multiplatform) was neutral or biased in its coverage of the news during the 2020 New Zealand general election? (Or specific media, for example, Mainstream English language media/Chinese language media)

Political:

Where participants obtained their information:

26. Have you ever received a call or email from a polling agency?
27. Can you expand on your motivation for voting in the 2020 election?
28. How did you make your decision about who to vote for?
29. Where did you get your information about the political parties policies, candidates background, and election news and so on?

30. The voting system is seen by some as quite complicated. Where did you get your information about how to actually cast your vote, and about the voting system? If you wanted to find out information about the policies of these other parties, where would you go to find out?

2020 New Zealand general election engagement:

31. Did you contact any Chinese candidate to express your opinions during the 2020 election? (Labour-Naisi Chen; National-Nancy Lu;Act-Ada Xiao)

32. What issues were you interested in at 2020 New Zealand general election? (Covid, immigration, education, housing, medical, etc.)

33. How those issues might or might not influenced your decision to vote? (aware of what the different policies of the main parties are on these issues, and whether or not they were a factor in their voting decision, etc.)

34. How well these issues were covered in different types of media?

35. Have these issues or policies changed your opinion of the political parties? How?

36. Political engagement is not just voting. For instance, it could be protests, engaging with local city council, and fundraising, etc. Have you done anything else in addition to voting in terms of political engagement?

37. We are now at the end of the interview, do you have any suggestions, ideas or thoughts you would like to express about the relationship between media and political engagement of the Chinese community in New Zealand?

Participants	Nationality	Length of living in NZ (years)	Occupation
1	China P.R.C	25	Social Woker
2	China P.R.C	8	Engineer
3	China P.R.C	20	Media Owner
4	China P.R.C	30	Academia
5	China P.R.C	15	Public servant
6	China P.R.C	9	Researcher
7	China P.R.C	6	Hospitality
8	China P.R.C	10	Admin
9	NZ	40	Freelance
10	China P.R.C	20	Freelance
11	China P.R.C	12	Public servant
12	Hong Kong	NZ born	NGO
13	Taiwan	30	Professional
14	NZ	NZ born	Retired
15	China P.R.C	16	Journalist
16	China P.R.C	8	Student

17	China P.R.C	18	Teacher
18	China P.R.C	26	Admin
19	Taiwan	25	Teacher

Figure 23 Participants details for depth interview

Appendix C Ethic Approval

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THE UNIVERSITY OF

WAIKATO

Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Jiancheng Zheng

Ann Hardy

Pat Barrett

Isabelle Delmotte

School of Arts

31 May 2021

Dear Jiancheng

Re: FS2021-28: The Chinese migrant diaspora, ethnic Chinese media and Mainstream English language media in New Zealand and political engagement

Thank you for submitting your revised application to the ALPSS Human Research Ethics Committee. We have reviewed the final electronic version of your application and the Committee is now pleased to offer formal approval for your research activities as detailed therein.

Please contact the Committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to add further research activities or make changes to your project as it unfolds. We wish you all the best with your research. Thank you for engaging with the process of ethical review.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Cooper', written in a cursive style.

Nathan Cooper, Chair

Division of Arts, Law, Psychology & Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee